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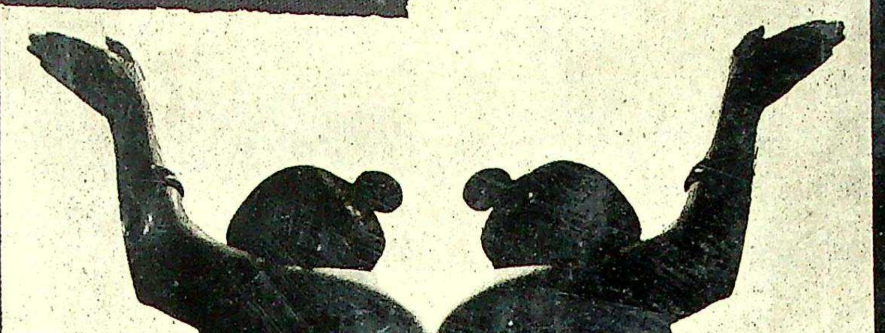

EASTERN SPIRITUALITY

IAN KESARCODI-WATSON

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EASTERN SPIRITUALITY

—GODHOOD OF MAN
—ESSAYS

By

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To IHITA AND NIMA
Those Whom the Swami Says I "Love Too Much"
and to the Swami Himself, with Respectfull Gratitude.

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1

INTRODUCTION

The General Thrust of Eastern Spirituality

I. It is good to see in the West a steady growth of interest in those Eastern metaphysics and religions hitherto unknown in any wide way to it. It is not my wish to comment on this, or say why this should have proven so; but rather more simply to offer the following essays as a contribution to the understanding fostered by this growing interest. The metaphysics and religions I have in mind are, of course, most especially the non-Semitic ones, whose thrust is spearheaded by Hinduism and Buddhism. I will use the general term "Spirituality" for these traditions, and in introducing these chapters, I want to say a few basic words about the general thrust of this Spirituality.

II. Firstly, it is perhaps important to observe that, though mostly I'll be addressing and speaking about Hinduism, much I will say will certainly relate to the central doctrines and practices of the other traditions I have in mind—mainly Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism—all of which grew in some way out of the former. Or anyway, so far as India goes, this is true. There is much about, for instance, Buddhism in China, Korea, Japan, even (though here it's less true) Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Burma, Nepal, which differs *somewhat* from Buddhism *as it was* within India before its dispersal about 8th Century A.D. But this is because there is much about these as expressions of Buddhism which come, not from India—so not from Hinduism—but from native philosophies and religions of the country into which it went. Ch'an Buddhism shows distinct Taoist, Confucionist, even Ancestor Veneration traits; and the Tantric tradition out of Tibet has much that's from *Bön*, an indigenous pre-Buddhist movement. Still, the central doctrines of even these outside reflections of Mother India are more often basically concordant with Hinduism than not.

It is of course also true that the one or two bastions of Hinduism *outside* India—Nepal and Bali —differ in ways due in part also to native influence, though in part also to the odd syncretistic tendencies and history these places have exhibited for mixing both Hinduism and Buddhism. And the fact that this mixture has been happy, it is well to note and learn from, anyway bespeaks the inner *doctrinal* harmony between the two movements. The ways they differ are mainly outward: in the icons venerated and practices exercised.

III. So then, what, most generally speaking, is the central thrust of Eastern thought and practice? Very simply—and it's all, very simple; though not always readily *seen* as such: *to know the truth*. And most crucially, to know that "Truth" which will, in the first instance, set you free; then, beyond free. To know, in other words, what's real; and to know it in such a way that one's behaviour conforms to it. This I would want to say is the goal of all philosophies which have not, as many modern Western ones have, forgotten or abandoned metaphysics. And since, I would want further to say, *practising* what's found in questing saving truth *means* "doing religion"—the goal of all religions as well.

Put very simply, then: the aim of Eastern Spirituality is to know what's real, as distinct from what *appears* to be, but in fact is not. More of course: to know this such that its knower—you : me—is made, not merely clearer in mind, but also clearer in person, in those ways needed to make us better people; in ways, that is, needed to *purify* us.

It is well now to note that Eastern Spirituality has no use for the typically Western "fact : value" distinction; the distinction which says that "the facts" are one thing, and whatever "value" they may have, another. "Value", in other words, is not "a fact". To Eastern thought, knowing what's ultimately real will, in some self-evident way, amount to *being* the only thing of worth. Put in another way—enlightenment *amounts to* "goodness, personified".

How? The matter is complex, but let's stick to simplicities. What are we seeking? Knowledge of realness; that knowledge of realness which purifies. How does it purify? By, very simply, banishing those ignorances (*avidyā*) and hindering influences (*nīvaraṇa*), which get in the way of acting correctly. Acting correctly in what way? In every way relevant to being a person. That is, knowledge of realness *simply amounts to*:

(*i*) being rid of all ignorance, hence purified of that;

(*ii*) being *in a position to* get rid of hindering influences, because, being no longer ignorant, *I simply see* them for what they are.

And so, knowledge of realness or of truth amounts to being *partially* purified, as well as being in possession of all needed to be *wholly* so. And what, I would ask, could be of more value or worth than the factual condition of being purified: for this equals "being perfected".

IV. I've now drawn together three terms—"truth", "realness", "worth" (for which I could have used as synonym, "goodness")—through the notions of "purification" and "perfection". Let me rehearse this simple point again, in a slightly different way. Knowing the truth means being perfected in wisdom. Being perfected in wisdom means being a vehicle for all that matters (at the personal level). Accordingly, it means, "what matters, personified", or, should you prefer, "goodness, personified". For the perfectly wise man is not one who merely has a clever mind: he's one who has *an accomplished person*.[1]

But someone may now say: "But I can *know* what I *should* do, and not do it." But, feasible and transparent as this simple objection seems, Eastern Spirituality most certainly decides against it, even as possible. Since to be enlightened, *truly* enlightened, and not merely seemingly so, is *eo ipso* always to act as one should. Again, this is complex, but let us once more be as simple about it as possible.

Briefly, the verdict of the East upon a man who could *say* this, either as a mere speculative objection, or as a claimed fact about his actual state ("I *do* know, & I *don't* do"), is that he can neither be enlightened, nor accomplished. He is not enlightened because he doesn't know at least this crucial truth: that only doing what one should (*dharma*) can bring benefit (*i.e.*, "goodness"). I have used a new phrase—"doing what one should". What is this? And the answer I have implicitly, and now explicitly, given is: getting close to, and dwelling in the nearness of, what's real. That is, "directing all energy, every deed, to simply being true to, or at one with, what's real, as distinct from what merely appears to be". And this, we can now conclude, is, ultimately, the Eastern answer to the question—"What has value?" And what, I indeed challenge anyone to proffer, *could* matter more, *could* be more worthy, than—*being true to what's real*.

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[1] See the essays in M. Hiriyanna's *Quest After Perfection* for enlightening discussion of "being accomplished".

Accordingly, the man in question—one who has, or says he could have, an inkling of what he should do, but does something else—is not enlightened, so not to be taken in earnest. But nor is he accomplished. For the simple reason that he's not in charge of the warring members of his person; he's not the Lord (*pati*) of his inclinations, desires, temptations, or other hindering influences, arising from ignorance. I will say no more about this, as the point is made : that this objection is not in the East considered worthy of serious attention, since made by a person upon a matter about which he's in no position to know. This—that knowing worth is *doing* and *being* it—is a matter about which only the enlightened and accomplished—*i.e.*, those who do know it—are entitled to significant opinion. And the unvarying consensus among such beings is that, knowing the truth *is* doing and being it. Their lives completely attest so. Which leads to the next point, which will, hopefully, strengthen and clarify this claim.

V. It is the Hindu understanding that, once you know the truth, are enlightened unto it, there *can be* no desire to do other than keep faith with it. Hence, if a person is patently *not* being true to what's real, it's clear he doesn't really *know* it: he hasn't *discrimination* (*buddhi*). Now this differs from the Christian, and certain other Semitic traditions (*e.g.*, Judaism), since it appears to *deny* free-will of perfected-man: or rather, of man whose vision is perfect clarity about what's real. The difference could be outlined in this way.

Hinduism says that, if you truly have this vision, you can't even *desire* to do other than dwell in Its glow, than, that is, keep faith with Its nature, or simply body It forth. Christianity, on the other hand, holds it possible for *angels* who *do have* the Christian equivalent of this vision—the "vision of God", to use a metaphor—to turn from It, to rebel, to fall; that is, to *desire* to be faithless.

Now, though it's too early to say more than a little,[1] this difference reflects a difference in *image* about the nature of what, after proper scrutiny, proves real. Put simply, for Hinduism, and of course its Eastern kin, the realness beneath all appearing things *just proves to be* the same as what

[1] See Chapter V.

I really am. Which means—no clash of wills, no clash of desires. Let me explain.

The Eastern Spirit affirms that, when I know this realness, I *am* it; that this is simply matter of fact.[1] Accordingly, if I am keeping faith with it, I am being true to myself. Moreover, at *this* supreme level of self-awareness, *whatever* I keep faith with is my (enlightened) person; so, at this supremely enlightened level, I can (logically) do no other than keep faith with what's real. Since this is what's real beyond all reals, there's nothing else to be true to, nothing else to live in terms of. Mere expression or bodying-forth of the person at this level, or in this manner of being, is expression or bodying-forth of ultimate realness. Accordingly, there's no *denial* of free-will, because no question of any compulsion. I just body-forth the truth. I can do no other; not because I'm compelled, but because this truth is *all I am.*

On the other hand, there's no *affirmation* of free-will either. Often, the enlightenment-level is spoken of as that of *absolute freedom,* and in some ways, this is accurate: it is that "manner of being" restricted by nothing, confined or limited in no way. In this sense, it most certainly is absolutely free. It is in no way imposed upon. There is a famous Buddhist scripture in which Gotama is said to speak of *Nirvāṇa* in these words: "There is that sphere wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation;

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[1] See, for instance, *Bṛhadāranyāka Upaniṣad*, 4:4.22-25.

where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun; this I say is free from coming and going, from duration and decay; there is no beginning and no establishment, no result and no cause; this indeed is the end of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*)."[1] And Hinduism uses similar language to predicate the same lack of condition and of limit of the enlightenment—level—*avyakta* (unmanifest); *anantam* (infinite, *i.e.*, non-finite); and *acintya* (non-conceptualizable), for instance.

But this is a far cry from predicating free-*will* of it. For will, free or not, is a limitation; it imposes restrictions of time, strength, capacity, knowledge, and motivation, all of which belong essentially, and not accidentally, to the phenomenon—for that it is—of willing. Briefly, enlightenment is a "manner of being" beyond will, which is a function of *buddhi* and not of *ātman*.

And so, though this is not the *opposite* of a state of free-will, since it's not a *determined* or *compelled* "manner of being", it's not the *same as* such a state, either. This "manner of being" achievement of which is the aim of Eastern Spirituality, is beyond both willing and being compelled, altogether. It's that "manner of being" for which the words *nirvāṇa* (*nibbāna*, Pali), or *mokṣa* are used; and to which the words *samādhi* or *satori* (an equivalent term from certain forms of Japanese Buddhism), are often attached as quasi-descriptive ones referring to this level on the basis of the extra-ordinary, mostly trance-like behaviour observable by the unenlightened in gazing upon the enlightened in deep meditation.

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[1] *Udāna Nikāya*, sect. 80. Quoted by Rune Johansson, p. 51; *The Psychology of Nirvana*; Allen & Unwin; 1969.

For Hinduism, and its ilk, then, the enlightened man is not like Christ, the Second Perfected Adam, in Christianity. For Christ is said, not only to *have* will, but to have *two real ones*—human and Divine—but with no problem of conflict, for the human one *always* bows to the Divine will. This is the doctrine known as *Kenosis*, of Christ's voluntary exinanition. Not so with Hinduism. The enlightened man, or *buddha* (which literally means, "the awakened one"), dwells in realms *beyond* the phenomenon of willing, beyond, indeed, any phenomenon at all. As such, we may, if we're careful, say he's absolutely free, absolutely unconditioned, absolutely unrestricted, absolutely unlimited. As one small but sacred scripture, known widely to many of the holiest *sadhus*, remarks:

> "I (*ātman*, as the real person I am, and realize myself to be on enlightenment, or *mokṣa*) am neither bound nor free. I am not separate from *Brahman* (the Sanskrit word for the Ultimate Realness behind *all* things)." Indeed, "why callest thou *ātman* personal or impersonal, since thou (*as ātman*) art neither bound nor free (being effectively beyond both, so far as both entail contrast.)"[1]

Still, no more for now. Enough has been said to be clear about the one thing this Introduction has striven to convey: that the goal most centrally, of Eastern Spirituality is, put very simply, where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun; this I say is free from coming and going, from duration and decay; there is no beginning and no establishment, no result and no cause; this indeed is the end of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*)."[1] And Hinduism uses similar language to predicate the same lack of condition and of limit of the enlightenment—level—*avyakta* (unmanifest); *anantam* (infinite, *i.e.*, non-finite); and *acintya* (non-conceptualizable), for instance.

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Still, no more for now. Enough has been said to be clear about the one thing this Introduction has striven to convey: that the goal most centrally, of Eastern Spirituality is, put very simply, the *practical* one of self-fulfilment, the *practical* one of achieving that manner of being which is man, purified and perfected, which is "man, transcendent", "man, enlightend" "man, *nirvāṇa*-d or *mokṣa*-d", to coin what is probably the most adequate term for this end. And the Easterner, loyal to his Spirituality, directs everything to this end. And whilst there may be fewer than ever who earnestly do so these days, for the West has made its inroads, it is pleasing to see a naissance—renaissance is perhaps too strong—of interest in this Spirituality in places other than the East.

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[1] *Avadhuta Gītā*; sections 43 & 46.

Still, the gap remains enormous; and these few essays are an effort to lessen it, by shedding some light upon this Eastern goal, its quest and ramifications; a shedding I will often do by comparing the East in these ways with its counterpart in the West.

2

MAN-GOD

I. Introduction

Religious traditions have sanctified two main ways of talking about man as God, the Ultimate in Divinity.[1] And these ways have permeated, not only what the West calls "Theology", but also much of what it calls "Philosophy" as well. The Orient, for its part—and I have especially India in mind, though no less Buddhist countries of the Far East, and Ancient China—has seldom found need for this distinction; and partly because its way—the way of the Hindu and the Buddhist—its way of addressing man's Godliness has usually been such that no bifurcation of man's ways and those of God has helpfully been possible.

But where there has been this distinction, as there is in Semitic traditions which stress the Otherness of God and man's estrangement, a profane wisdom (philosophy), as *distinct from* one that is Divine (theology), is clearly possible: for it is then at least possible sensibly to speak about man on his own, and apart from God, so at least sensible to build man-centred systems which are not *God*-directed. No such possibility has really been open for the Oriental East—for we mustn't forget that those Semitic traditions now embraced by the West are in origin Eastern—for no ultimate distinction between man and God has ever seemed viable to it.

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[1] It is vital to stress that by the term "God" I will here mean *only*, "the Ultimate in Divinity". I do *not* wish to suggest, and in later chapters will tend to deny, that all subsequent *Characterizations* of this "Ultimate" are the same in all traditions: only that traditions which do speak of man *as* this "Ultimate" have done so in two main ways.

Yet this Semitic distinction, supremely attractive as it is in its simplicity, has also been fraught with peril: and to draw this peril forth, and especially to show how too much philosophy spiced with too little theology can often undermine the free flow of *religion*, which is neither, I intend eventually to look at a piece of Christian apologetic from a figure—that great eccentric Dane, Kierkegaard—as important for one as he has been for the other.

But before clarifying this difference—between Semitic and non-Semitic traditions—one that has punctuated much of the sadly unnecessary conflict between the great Religions, we should perhaps clarify one or two minor points of usage: one about "theology", and the other about "Man-God".

(I) In noting that "the Eastern tradition (of Christendom) has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology", Vladimir Lossky illustrates his point in these words: "We must live the dogma expressing a revealed truth, which appears to us as an unfathomable mystery, in such a fashion that instead of assimilating the mystery to our mode of understanding, we should, on the contrary, look for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience it mystically."[1] "Theology", for Lossky, *is* God speaking: and understanding it, *living* this Word. It is, in other words, *theos logos* purely and simply.

I will not use this word to forge so close a link with mysticism; but rather in the more normal Christian way, where it does seem to convey an effort to "assimilate" "revealed truth" primarily, if not entirely, "to our mode of (rational) understanding". "Theology" in the West is usually distinguished from both "mysticism" and "faith" (in the sense of "being faithful"). And though I certainly sympathize with Lossky's usage, to avoid confusion, I will use Jacob Boehme's term "theosophy" for—"theology as the verbally expressed aspect of a lived mysticism".

(II)[2] Two themes running through the work of another communicant of Eastern Orthodoxy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, are those of *bogochelovek*—which literally means "God-Man", and is a reference to the Godmanhood of Christ—and *chelovekobog* —which literally means "Man-God".

Dostoevsky uses this latter theme—that of Mangodhood—to refer to the preposterous enormity of man, the ego-asserting creature, abusing the Transcendence of Divinity by affirming his mere humanity to be Godly. Typical examples of Dostoevsky's intrigue with this Judeao-Christian theme are the Narrator in *Notes From Underground*, Kirillov in *The Possessed*, and Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

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[1] V. Lossky; *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*; Clarke; London; 1957; p. 8.

[2] The possible source of confusion was brought to my attention by my wife, who, amongst other things, is a scholar of Russian language and literature, and to whom I am indebted for much more.

But the sense I am giving the expression "Man-God" is not this. In fact, it finds one of its expressions in the doctrine of Christ as Dostoevsky's *bogochelovek* or "God-Man". For many reasons, soon to emerge, I prefer the phrase "Man-God" for man-as-God, for, that is, the Godliness that's man, and will avoid the more current "God-Man".

II. **The First Mode**:

So then, the first of those modes of speaking about Man-God is this:

> *the suggestion that, properly understood and in his very heart (antar-hṛdaya ākāśah,* "*the* inner-heart space"; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad;* IV:4:22*), every man is God, is Divinity, is the Ultimate in Its true nature and essence; and that, what we call "life" is or should be a matter merely of awakening ever more to this fact, provided the proper deeds (dharma) be done, and once awakened (buddhāis;* "awakened ones": *Buddha* means "the Awakened One"), *merely living It.*

Now this Mode is typically that of the Hindu, Buddhist and related traditions (Sikhism, Jainism); though perhaps no less of certain Western mystics. Thinkers like Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Jacob Beohme, and even Dionysius the Areopagite, whose influence upon both Eckhart and Eastern Christendom is clear from the veneration shown him by both, bear a look in this regard. But first, the Hindu tradition: and let me allow it to talk for itself through its scriptures and inspired writings.

No set of writings is more important to Hindu philosophy, nor more hallowed to the *sadhaka*, or Spiritual Seeker, than the *Upaniṣads*, which, with the *Bhagavadgītā*, must constitute the very centre of Hindu *śruti* (lit; "that which is heard", *i.e.*, revealed scripture). And throughout these writings this First Mode is sounded more clearly, perhaps, than anywhere else. The essentials are well voiced in these two utterances from one of the oldest of these writings. "The self is indeed *Brahman* (*sa vā ayam ātmā brahma*), consisting of (the essence of) wisdom, mind, life-force (*prāṇa*), sight, hearing, earth, water, air, ether (*ākāśa*), light and non-light, desire and non-desire, anger and non-anger, righteousness and non-righteousness. (The essence of) everything consists of this (self). (*sarvaṃayah tad yad etat*)."[1] Or again, at greater length: "He, indeed, who is this Great Unborn Self, is that which consists of wisdom among the powers enlivening the sense-organs (*prāṇeṣu*).[2] He who in that inner-heart place (*antar-hṛdaya ākāśah*) lies, is the Controller of All, the Ruler of All, the Over-Lord

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[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*; IV:4:5.

[2] Most translations render "*prāṇesu*" by "of the sense-organs", but this is plainly false, or at best misleading. "*Prāṇa*" is the traditional term for "breath" or "life-force"; occasionally—in the early *Vedas*—it is even used as a synonym for "*ātman*". "*Indriyās*" is the term for "sense-organs"; and had the Sanskrit author meant to speak of sense-organs, there can be little doubt he would have used this term. What is meant here is not the senses as *physical organs*, but the inner-powers emanating from the *antah-karana* ("inner-instrument" or "inner-man"), which *enlivens* these organs and enables their perceptive use.

(*adhipati*) of All, He is not made bigger by good works, nor by evil works degraded (*kanīyān*), this Lord of all, this Creation's Over-Lord (*bhūtadhipatih*), this Creation's Protector (*bhūtapālaḥ*). He is a bank holding back these (the different) worlds from penetrating one another. Him the *Brahmanas* (or, *Brahman*-seekers) strive to know by *Veda*-study, sacrifice, gifts, penance, and fasting."[1]

Or we might look to *Śankarācarya*, who is not only the finest expositor of this tradition as *advaita vedānta* (*lit*: "the not dual culmination of sacred knowledge"), but also the one man who, more than any other since, has given to Hinduism the form it takes today. In his *Aparokcānubhūti* (*lit*: "not-beyond-sight" perception; *i.e.*, *Immediate Apprehension*), he remarks: " 'Eternal indeed the form of one's own inner-being (*ātman*); 'the seen' (*dṛśya*), the very opposite of that'—such settled conviction is unshakeable wisdom indeed (*viveko vastunah*; *lit*: "objective discrimination")."[2] Even more to the central point:, " 'I am indeed *Brahman*, unchanging, dwelling in peace (*śāntaḥ*), and taking the form of Being – Consciousness-Bliss (*saccidānanda*)'—this is called 'sacred knowledge' by those who have awakened (*buddhāis*)."[3]

Indeed, speaking of this "awakening (to self-knowledge)" with the typical Christian expression "birth" (or, "new birth", as a Spiritual awakening), one of the mystics earlier mentioned says what amounts to much the same in these words:

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[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka U.*; IV:4:22.

[2] *Aparokcānubhūti* ; sect. 5.

[3] *Aparokcānubhūti* ; sect. 24.

> "Now the question arises, whether this birth is to be found in anything which, albeit relating to God, is nonetheless taken in from without through the senses, in any presentiment of God as good, wise, or compassionate, or whether intellect can conceive of divinity: whether this birth is to be found in any suchlike things? In truth, no! for, although good and Godlike, they are nonetheless introduced from without through the senses; *all must well up from within, out of God*, if this birth is to shine with a really clear light, and thy own work must lie over, every faculty serving his ends not thine own. If this work is to be done, *God alone must do it, and thou must undergo* it."[1]

God-knowledge, then, this "new-birth" or "awakening", dawns from within, moving ever outwards. And this dawning is the Self-luminous activity of *Brahman*, of God, of Divinity, who dwells there, in the secret cave of the heart (*gūham hṛdaya*; *Katha Upaniṣad*; 11:1:12); it is not a breaking-in of something from without. And this knowledge, this new-dawning, since it wells out of your being, from the very depths of your substance, must in some measure be *self*-knowledge. As Śankara notes in another work, significantly called *Svātmanirūpanāma* (*lit*: "the shape-name of one's own person"): "Although unobserved, being out of reach of the senses, *Brahman* (who dwells within you) is accessible through his self-manifestation (*svayaṁprakāsatvāt*). The expression, '*Arahman* is truth (*satyam*), gnosis

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[1] Meister Eckhart; ed. Pfeiffer; tr. C. de B. Evans; p. 21,

(*jñānam*) and infinity (*anantam*)', defines this situation most clearly."[1]

But this Mode is not of course saying that the individual, corruptible, publicly viewable thing I might sometimes call "me", the feeble and finite body, with perhaps the mind as well, is *God* or *Brahman*. That would clearly be absurd, for the flesh tainted with corruption cannot sensibly aspire to the station of the incorruptible God Who is infinite. Truth, wisdom and infinity are not the characteristics of a being so fraught with falsehood, stupidity and limits as I clearly know my individual body:mind to be. This Mode is speaking not of this, but of something other. The understanding is this: that the inward person I am and, upon awakening, at the moment of new-birth or dawning, suddenly *see* for what It is, proves to be none other than Divinity, than *Brahman*, than God in very truth—the God, that is, who *is* Truth, Wisdom and Infinity, the God of Unchanging Peace and of Pure Joy.

And this awakening, this growing into full and absolute self-knowledge, is, in Sanskrit terms, the moment of *mokṣa* (*lit*: "release"). And perhaps a few words upon this might not be amiss. *Mokṣa* is release into a full recognition of being infinity, and hence, of lacking all limit: it is, accordingly, a shattering of the bonds of *saṁsāra* (*lit*: "together-migration", hence, transmigration), that web of deceiving ignorance (*māyā* as *avidyā*) which binds one to the falsehood that one has limits, and so leads to those unenlightened actions (*karmān*) whose psychic traces (*vāsanās*) breed further ignorance. And since, obviously, this ignorance must be overcome before the clear light of self-knowledge can shine, one must live and re-live until it is overcome. To realize one's Godliness one must, in other words, suffer many births—profane not Spiritual births, for from the Spiritual birth one never dies; infinity knows no bounds—and many a death. *Saṁsāra* is the word for this series of births and deaths; for Hinduism believes, much as Christianity does, that the whole world *does* groan for salvation, that, cosmically, Godliness must out, that It eventually will, that It's nature necessitates this, so that, of men, "birth and rebirth as oft as proves needed" is a law beyond any redress.

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[1] *Śankara*; *Svātmanirūpanāma*; sloka 20.

This "groaning together", Buddhism, and especially Japanese Buddhism in its Jodo and Jodo Shin varieties, calls the "inner togetherness", or "weness", of me; the fact that we *are* bound inwardly together, so that "my" salvation carries within it the seeds of salvation for all, a realization of *what* this means, and hence of the *necessity* to work towards this end. But, a caveat.

This bond is at the psyche level, and awakening lifts a man beyond and out of this. It *is* possible, in other words, for one man, caught in this mutual interchange and flow of shared suffering due to ignorance, to lift himself, and himself alone, beyond it. Yet, not in the sense that his suffering becomes less shared, proves itself a thing on its own and unshared. The psyche for Buddhism is never a thing on its own, but a shared, as it were, "portion" of an endless psyche flow and flux. A Buddha is able to lift himself beyond, not because he can isolate his own suffering; but because he does what Masters enjoin, *with the result* that he awakens again or rather becomes alive to, his Original-Nature—that which Buddhists call "*śūnyatā*" (Emptiness) or *Nirvāṇa*, and Hindus, *Ātman*, *ānanda* or *Brahman*. This is what Brahmānanda, that great yogic intimate of Ramakrishna, called "that mine of bliss within you".

And once awakened, the realization of universal suffering through shared ignorance leads to the compassion needed for the task, enlightened this time, of ceaselessly *teaching* the path to emancipation, to *mokṣa*, to *Buddhahood*. A Buddha must realize this, and recognize that this flow is what he, at the psyche-level, *is* (or *was*, when he thought this real), and not merely the "portion" he thought he was. In which case, the *logical* point is, leading others to *mokṣa* is no more than leading himself: in one sense, but not in another. Not in the sense that *Buddhahood* has not been awakened in him *until* all creation has been enlightened. Rather in the sense that, leading others who think they are "portions", is making them see that they are What he is, not only in their Original-Nature, their inner *Buddha*-body (*dharma-kāya*), but in this delusory psyche-nature also.

These then are some facts about, and implications of, the First Mode, illustrated from the Hindu, and a little from the Buddhist, viewpoints. Similar, though perhaps less telling since less emphatic illustration might as easily be taken from Meister Eckhart, or even the *Sūfī* mystic, Al-Ghazzali. Eckhart, speaking of Christ's injunction to "seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all things shall be given to you", observes: "By this Kingdom of God we understand the soul, for the soul is of like nature with the Godhead. Hence, all that has been said here about the Kingdom of God, *how God is Himself the Kingdom*, may be said *with equal truth* about the soul."[1] Or again: "When God made man the *innermost heart of the Godhead* was put into man."[2] (Compare the reference to *Brahman* as in "the inner-heart space" (*antar-hṛdaya ākāśaḥ*) of man, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV:4:22.

And again, paralleling the ineffability of man's "soul" to that of God, he says: "We cannot give a name to God, nor can we name the soul in her own nature. The point where these twain meet is holiness."[3] The *Upaniṣads* are repeatedly emphatic that the person I really am *(ātman)* is beyond words and logic.[4] And a Buddhist scripture, ascribed to Boddhidharma, describes the nature and intent of Zen as:

> "Not relying on words or letters,
> An independent Self-transmitting apart from any teaching (in "words or letters");
> Directly pointing to man's Mind,
> Awakening his Original-Nature, thereby actualizing his Buddhahood."

Or yet another theme which might be a mere reflection of Hindu doctrine—that only quelling

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[1] Eckhart; op cit; Vol. 1; p. 270. See also, Vol. 1, pp. 6, 21, 48, 372, 418, 419, 478; Vol. 2, pp. 7-8, 73, 89.

[2] Eckhart; op cit; Vol. 1; p. 436. Italics, mine.

[3] Eckhart; op cit; Vol. 1; p. 437; sect. 65.

[4] See, eg., *Katha* 1:2:33; 1:3:15: *Mundaka* 111:2:3: *Kena* 1:3-4.

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the senses, and withdrawing from attachment to the sensible world, can lead to Buddhahood, the dawning of true self-knowledge—abounds in Eckhart: "When having locked the doors of my five senses, I am desiring God with all my heart, then do I *find* God in my soul *as clearly* and as joyful as He is in life eternal."[1]

Finally, these many themes together in a parable used by Eckhart more than once:

> "Meister Eckhart met a lovely naked boy. He asked him whence he came. He said, 'I come from God,—'Where hast thou left Him?' —'In virtuous hearts.'—'Whither away?'— 'To God.'—'Where wilt thou find Him?,— 'Leaving all creatures.'—'Who art thou?'— —'A king.'—'Where is thy kingdom?' —'In my own heart.'—'Mind no one shares it with thee.'—'So I do.' He took him to his cell and said, 'Take any coat thou wilt'—'Then I should be no king.', (he said) and vanished. It was God Himself that he had with him a little spell."[2]

Al-Ghazzali, the sage-saint whose influence upon Sūfīsm was quite as monumental as Sankara's within Hinduism, is no less telling. In a work little known to the West, Al-Ghazzali, in a passage I must quote in full for its beauty and succinctness, embodies all and more of the themes taken up by Eckhart.

> "So then" says Al-Ghazzali, "the soul's preoccupation with study is the removal of the infirmity which has befallen it, from

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[1] Eckhart; op cit; Vol. I; p. 438; sect. 67.

[2] Eckhart; op cit; Vol. 1; p. 438; sect. 68.

the substance of the soul, in order that it may return to what it knew in its original state and what it understood in its pristine purity. And when you have understood the cause and purpose of study and the real nature of the soul and its substance, then know that the soul which is sick needs to study and to spend its life in acquiring knowledge. But as for the soul which realizes its sickness and whose infirmity is light and its evil trivial and its clouds thin, and its natural disposition sound, it has no need for excessive study and long toil. On the contrary, a very little consideration and reflection suffices for it, *because it is restored thereby to its natural state, and it returns to what it was at first and realizes itself and contemplates the mysteries within it and brings the potentiality which it possesses to actuality, and what was implanted in it becomes an adornment of it, and its affair is completed and its condition made perfect, and it comes to know many things in a very few days.* Then it interprets what is known, in the right way, and becomes wise, perfect, articulate and seeks light by approaching the Universal Soul, which pours forth of its abundance, when it encounters the individual soul. *And the latter becomes assimilated to it*[1] by way of passionate

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[1] The translator notes the following illuminating parallel from Porphyry's *Theology of Aristotle*, the form in which Plotinus would have been known to Al-Ghazzali: "It becomes assimilated to Universal Soul and becomes like it in manner and life; and there is no distinction between or difference."

> love, in the beginning, and it cuts off the root of envy and the beginnings of contempt and turns aside from the vanities of this world and its pomp, and when it has reached this stage it has become wise and has attained to salvation and to victory. And this is what all men desire."[1]

A brief word finally about an effort to discredit some of the parallels I am claiming, the classic comparison by Rudolph Otto of Śankara and Eckhart—*Mysticism, East and West*. Otto's approach is that of a convinced Christian and, though not other than impeccably honest (within the confines of such lights), tends to find, to the credit of Christianity and the debit of Hinduism, more disparities than clear sight will really allow. I take but one instance. He concludes his work with a chapter, titled *The Ethical Content. Soul, Spirit, Conscience*, and which is a mere single paragraph: a single paragraph in which Śankara is chided for having failed where Eckhart succeeded:

> "Eckhart", says Otto, "becomes necessarily what Śankara could never be: the profound discoverer of the rich indwelling life of the 'soul' and a leader and physician of 'souls', using that word in a sense which is only possible on a Christian basis. Upon Indian soil there could never have developed this inward, increasing preoccupation with the soul's life as a life of Gemüt and of conscience, and therewith the 'cura animarum' in the sense

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[1] Al-Ghazzali; *Risālat al-Laduniyya*; tr. Margaret Smith; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*; 1938; pp. 372-373. Italics, mine.

which is characteristic of, and essential to, Christianity from the earliest days. It is upon this calling, as a curator animarum (shepherd of souls) that finally everything Eckhart has said or done as a schoolman or as a preacher, as a simple Christian or as a profound Mystic, depends."[1]

And of course, Otto is "Christian apologist *par excellence*", in these few words. Unfortunately, these words sadly lack the truth; they simply miss —perhaps through a partisan lack of "*voūs*"—vast chunks of the ethical teachings of the *Upaniṣads, Gītā* and related *śruti*, not to mention *smṛti* (*lit*: "that which is remembered"; i.e., man-made tradition). And most blatantly do they ignore the *Boddhisattva* doctrine, the Hindu—and Buddhist—teaching about shepherding souls. This term, now used far more in Buddhism than ever it was in Hinduism, is the doctrine enjoining enlightened men, the awakened ones (*buddhāis*), not to dwell for always in realms Divine discovered, but to return to guide and to save those wandering, wretched, sick and ignorant ones, into paths of similar Light.

Indeed, Śankara, the very man pilloried by Otto for lack of any drive for the doctoring of "souls" —Eckhart, the "physician of 'souls'" Śankara "could never be"—is the one person whose healing service to souls unenlightened for the blight of *avidyā*, can be paralleled by only the greatest and most compassionate of Holy Men in any history. For Śankara has done, in the most supreme degree, that service of healing which knows no equal, nor any better— the healing service of enlightening through *teaching*.

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[1] R. Otto; *Mysticism East & West*; p. 215.

No task could be greater, for no task, if successful, can more nearly impart, or break upon others, that awakening which shatters into perfect freedom, for shattering into a realization of that Infinity one is. Otto, in his *angst* to be Christian enough, has been, like most apologists, too little Christian. For the heart of Christianity is *teaching* of the Word—not just by words, but by all that shows forth Godliness. And this, is equally the heart of Hinduism.

So much for the First Mode. I have shown, simply by illustration, that whilst it typifies the non-Semitic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism (though no less Sikhism and Jainism), it might as easily sit with at least certain approaches to Semitic ones. Factually speaking, this broad distinction—Semitic: Non-Semitic—is delicate to destruction at this point. It holds only vaguely. On the other hand, argument, usually from the Semitic side, and especially Christian, denouncing one in the face of trenchant differences supposedly obtaining between them, is not uncommon. The argument I will deal with from Kierkegaard is one such; an argument I will use to illustrate the ways in which most such arguments breakdown. For most such arguments start by assuming what they hope to prove—that crucial deep-down differences must silently fester between Religious expressions, or *weltanschaaungs*, so patently different on the surface.

III. The Second Mode

The second viewpoint, peculiar to Christianity and, if we include the Messianic tradition (given, of course, a certain interpretation: for the awaited

Messiah *need* not be *God*-in-man), Judaism also, is brief to put and easy, in one way, to understand. And so, putting it briefly, and assuming much of this understanding, this:

> *that only one man, the Servant Messiah of Christianity, or (with the above proviso) the Conquering Messiah of Judaism, ever came—or will come—into this world as God; and though others may approach Deification, this is not in the sense of being as this man was—truly man and truly God, two natures in one hypostasis—but (i) something they may approach, not something they are, and (ii) achieve, not in the sense of being God, but of being most blessed of Him, of being transformed, in the image of the Man-God's purity of flesh, of his pure manhood, into that state called "sainthood", a state which, though no longer so corruptible as fallen-flesh, and reverting to the purity of the First Adam, is nonetheless only this—a creature purified of sin's curse, yet in essence distinct from the Godhead, as the Man-God Christ, Who shared in Trinitarian fullness, never was nor could be.*

These then are the two centrally sanctified ways of speaking of man as God: the First, in which we all *are* God, whether conscious of it or not, the Second, in which only one ever was, or will be. It is not my intention at this point to choose between them. That would anyway be stupid. Despite what often advocates, especially of the Second, sometimes say, each has a distinguished and traditional part in the history, and present, of Religious man; and neither can helpfully be advanced as in all ways superior. Each leads men—but, *different* men—to the same goal: self-fulfilment. And nothing will be gained by the militant, indeed, arrogant effort to establish that, nonetheless, people are more fulfilled in one tradition than in the other. For this is quite plainly *empirically* false. Saints and holy-men there are of equal calibre in all traditions, and any effort to gainsay this is simply arrant dishonesty. And fulfilment means nothing if not "saintliness".

Nor do I wish at this point to argue these Modes to be closer than they may on the surface seem. Later will perhaps prove time for that.

Let me instead illustrate the futility of the former militancy, usually excused in the name of something called "Missionary zeal", by examining an argument advanced by Kierkegaard against the viability of our First Mode.

In *Philosophical Fragments*, the forerunner to his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard is concerned to dismiss what he, I think correctly, believes to be "the Socratic view"; and precisely because, in it "each individual is his own centre, and the entire world centres to him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God."[1] In other words, he is attacking "the Socratic view" as an instance of our First Mode: and in the name, or supposed support, of his interpretation of the Christian variant of Mode Two.

The brief gist of his argument is this: that, because of its adherence to Mode One, the Socratic

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[1] Soren Kierkegaard; *Philosophical Fragments*; Princeton; 1936; p. 7.

teaching cannot be an *enlightening* one, cannot awaken its earnest devotees from *avidyā* to that knowledge which is Godly. For Socrates, as paradigm of Mode One, is merely one *man* talking to another *man* about the *humanity* of him. What else could the drawing forth of hidden self-knowledge *be* than merely knowledge of humanity, albeit deeply secret? And the swift answer to this is that, unless you are assuming what you're pretending to prove—that God *is* other than man, in any sense (with of course the cryptic exception of Christ)—the "else" this hidden knowledge may well prove to be is exactly That to which Mode One bears witness. This is no *argument* against Mode One, but a rhetorical dismissal of it for the circular reason that it differs, at least on the surface, from the Second Mode. But let me illustrate.

"In the Socratic conception", says Kierkegaard, "the teacher's love would be merely that of a deceiver if he permitted his disciple to rest in the belief that he really owed him anything, instead of fulfilling the function of the teacher to help the learner to become sufficient to himself."[1] Perfectly true. To Socrates, always assuming Plato is merely his mouthpiece and not in fact expressing his *own* view, teaching was Spiritual-midwifery—a term certainly admirably at home in describing Mode One. "My art", says Socrates, or Socrates through Plato, speaking to Theatetus, "of (Spiritual) midwifery is in most respects like theirs (midwives in the obstetric sense): but differs in that I attend upon men and not women (only), and I look after their souls when they are in labour, and not after their bodies; and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol' or a noble and true birth."[1]

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[1] Soren Kierkegaard; op cit; pp. 23-24.

To this point, then, Kierkegaard is correct, as he simply describes the Socratic approach. From here, however, he is far from correct, as he lapses into judgement based upon false assumptions and unexamined speculation. "But when God becomes a teacher", he continues "his love cannot be really seconding and assisting, *but is creative, giving a new being to the learner, or as we have called him the man born anew;* by which designation we signify the transition from non-being to being. The truth then is that the learner owes the teacher everything . . . . Between man and man the Socratic midwifery is the highest relation, and begetting is reserved for God, whose love is *creative.*"[2] Or again, "between man and man the maieutic relationship is the highest, and begetting belongs to God alone."[3]

But this fails to grasp even an inkling of the teaching structure between *guru* and *śiṣya*; enlightened Master and questing student. A Buddhist catechism carries this exchange:

"Question: Wasn't the Buddha just an ordinary man?

Answer: He was a man, but not ordinary."[4]

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[1] Plato; *Theatetus*; tr. Jowett; sect. 150.

[2] Kierkegaard; op cit; pp. 23-24. Except "creative", italics mine.

[3] Kierkegaard; op cit; p. 5.

[4] "A Buddhist Catechism"; *The Middle Way*; Vol. XLIX, No. 3; Nov. 1974.

The man-to-man teaching, in other words, associated with Mode One is not, as Kierkegaard astonishingly merely assumes, that of ordinary men teaching ordinary men. Were it so, little teaching of any moment would take place at all. Edifying another from the depths of one's ordinariness is bound to be other than enlightening, bound to be other than God-giving. But of course, the Awakened One, the Buddha—here used to signify all who live enlightened—is as he is precisely because he is other than ordinary; and his teaching is that of one whose God-consciousness *eo ipso* imparts the path of *Dharma*: his teaching is that of *Man-God*-to-man, not that of "man, merely"-to-"man, merely".

The other point here is about new-birth: that man can't make a man be born again, can't create a new, purified, perfected being where before was only the corrupt one. Only God can do this, for "begetting belongs to God alone". But again the point is simply missed, and the battle in no sense truly locked. For Mode One does confess a new-man—the man awakened to his Godliness, who is 'afresh' in every way known, or open, to Christian "sainthood". He even *looks* different through glowing with the radiance. And the Buddha who teaches, the enlightened *Ācharya* who guides, precisely directs man to this awakening, and hence to his new, Spiritual-birth. If he does not lay it on him from outside by some fiat of undeserved "grace", this is because he has no need; for the new-man is not made that way, but by an awakening, an enlightening that shines out from within, *under the sage guidance of* the Buddha who teaches.

And so, until Kierkegaard, and other Christian critics (of his ilk), confront the claims of these seemingly alien traditions about man's Godliness, rather than merely those he, and these critics, try to foist upon those criticized, neither he nor they can have any claim to a hearing. To criticize a tradition you must address it, and not what you (falsely) take it to be. And if you do this latter, you (quite literally) deserve to be ignored. Teaching from a wealth of ignorance is worse than no teaching at all.

VI. Elaboration

It must then be apparent, and for the simplest of reasons, that Kierkegaard's attempt to discredit the Socratic approach, and thereby Mode One, must entirely come to grief: so any viewpoint which relies upon Kierkegaard's reasons, or ones essentially similar, to denigrate other viewpoints, that is, upon the technique of "disproving" an opponent by only showing he differs from you, wont do either. And there are—sadly, I think—viewpoints within the wider Christian tradition which are critical of other traditions in this manner. Indeed, it is painfully all too true that the tendency to argue, or—perhaps better—preach an exclusivist path to "salvation" through this tradition is very much in evidence among the less enlightened members of it.

Catholicism,[1] in its Orthodoxy, is ambivalent here, though most (even educated) members of the Catholic Church, including—and, perhaps especially, —the Clergy, would, I suspect, still wish to hold to the doctorine of "salvation through Christ alone". Indeed, until recent moves towards healing communion between Christian brothers, it would have been stronger—"salvation through the Orthodox Catholic interpretation of Christ, alone". And though these views need not entail rejection of the non-Christian approaches to full understanding and expression of "Man-God"hood, for "Christ" could, here, be a mere symbol for one man's, or one tradition's incarnate vehicle, prompting a similar understanding and expression in others, they have, not surprisingly, often been used to promote such rejection.

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[1] I deliberately hold silence on the Eastern Orthodox Tradition. An eminent Divine of the Russian Orthodox Community once told me, wryly, that Gotama the Buddha was numbered among the accepted Saints of the Orthodox Church: evidence of true Ecumenism, certainly. But this fact is kept very quiet.

Evangelical Protestantism, preaching the priesthood of all "believers" (that is, Christians) before God,[1] has often been even more prone to this exclusivist extremity. For "all believers" means "all Christians", the veiled hint being that non-Christians have not the same status "before God"; and constituting "the priesthood" indicates that each "believer" is his *own*, wholly valid interpreter of the tradition, and its scripture. And notoriously, where authority is not invested in those whose Spiritual enlightenment is superior, Spiritual Democracy establishes the norms: and, again notoriously, in a Democracy the norms are bound to be the *Lowest Common Denominator*—not, in other words, those of Superior enlightenment, but, quite simply, those which are quantitatively the most common. And because a common view among men is the simple *non sequitur* that, because my view is correct (here, that "salvation is through Christ"), those of others which differ in outward form and expression are wrong, where Spiritual Democracy has been evidenced in Christianity, it has often degenerated into Spiritual Fascism.[1] That salvation is through Christ, as it undoubtedly is, in no way shows it is *only* through Christ. But, *why* it does not will not always be evident to those who are merely "believers"; and here, as elsewhere, education is, *of necessity*, by those of superior knowledge, that is, by, in this case, those of superior enlightenment, spiritually.

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[1] See the excellent small book of that name, *The Priesthood of All Believers*, by Dr. E.A. Payne, whose liberality of mind is evidenced, both by the fact that he has for many years been a Vice President of the World Council of Churches, and that another of his publications is a rare book on *The Shaktas*, a group of North Indian Hindus.

Spiritual Democracy has its surface advantages, of course, in that the Spirit can now be allowed to blow pretty much where it listeth. And I do not suggest that those whom it is proper, indeed wise, to accept as Authorized Educators of the rest of us, must have been through a certain systematic technical complex of institutionalized disciplines. Not all wise-men come forth from Colleges of Theology; nor are all who so come forth, wise. And one who did not, one who was touched by the Spirit, independent of Established Institutions, was the Protestant, Boehme. And yet, though in the final analysis Boehme does transcend the exclusivist tendency in question, there are times and flashes when the danger of Protestant freedom might be seen to incline him in this direction.

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[1] I borrow this term from a misguided article by Philip Rawson on Indian Aesthetics, recently anthologized by Osborne in *Aesthetics & The Modern World.* Rawson uses this term, astonishingly, of A.K. Coomaraswamy. Astonishingly, not because Coomaraswamy was never an arrogant man. Certainly, he sometimes was; and certainly, this sometimes reflects itself in his writing. Astonishingly, rather because, despite his occasional arrogance, Coomaraswamy was nonetheless ceaselessly concerned to argue the very opposite of the exclusivist position here entailed—to argue, indeed, for the essential *unity* of all Religious Traditions.

"The soul of man", says Boehme, "which has been breathed into him by God, is from the Eternal Father; but with that she has not yet attained the birth of the Son, wherein is the end of nature, and from which no created being issues."[1] In putting the Christian case for the need for the Incarnate Son, Boehme argues in another place: "From all eternity stood the name of *Jesus* in immovable love in man as the image of God. But when the soul (of man) lost the light, then the Word (*i.e.*, the Son, unmanifest, and with the Father "from all eternity") spoke the name of *Jesus* into what was moveable (*i.e.*, incarnate human form); into the faded *ens* of the heavenly world's substance."[2]

Now, I don't suggest there are claims in those words from Boehme which *must* preclude soteriologies advanced by other traditions, though certainly the suggestion that salvation for "the soul of man" *depends entirely and always upon* knowledge of Christ hovers suspiciously here. And preaching just this "dependence" to "the unsaved" (a synonym for "un-Christian") was the thrust, in part, of what used to be called "missionary work"—bringing "the gospel" to the infidel pagan (another synonym for "non-Christian"). Fortunately, the worst excesses of these days are mostly over.[1]

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[1] Jacob Boehme; *Three Principles*; IX:13.

[2] Jacob Boehme; *Grace*; VII:34.

Let me now leave these few sketchy Socio-Historical remarks. I have made them fundamentally to reject the suggestion that the exclusiveness here spoken of is a necessary element of Orthodox Christianity. I have hinted that the two modes of Man-God understanding differ only in one essential-being otherwise the same in all but form and surface expression. The one essential, or seeming essential, is this: that Christ is God's "*only* begotten Son", from which the conclusion is usually drawn that there has been but one Man-God. On the surface, this difference seems enormous. I want now to suggest that, far from it, it is indeed quite slight—or anyway, can *be interpreted* in such a way that nothing essential to Christianity is lost by embracing the first suggestion that all men are essentially God.

For the point is, the doctrine at issue here, which has led many Christians to the exclusivist tendency evidenced above, is in fact not one, but two doctrines run together. Firstly, the doctrine of Christ as a saving-vehicle, or necessary Incarnation, bearing unmitigated witness to full realization of Man-Godness, a doctrine paralleled in Hinduism by that of the *avatāra*; and secondly, that of the ultimate nature of man, that nature which man, the creature, in his development, is questing to realize, and give full voice to. And that Divinity saw fit to visit Jesus the Christ, or any other *avatāra* (Krishna or Buddha, for instance), upon a particular situation at a particular time in history, to act as a saving-vehicle for a particular tradition (or for certain individuals) is one fact (if it is): that man, the creature universally abroad upon this earth, has an *ultimate nature* to be realized, is another, by no means necessarily related fact. And whether one does relate to the other *need* depend upon no more than contingencies of historical circumstance and need.

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[1] Only mostly, I'm afraid. I encounted this form of bigotry more than once in my five years in Hong Kong; an evil only compounded by the fact that most are so well intentioned. Sweet people, most certainly.

Moreover, even had it been historically true (as it isn't) that only one *avatāra* had visited man, that would not of itself prove, or disprove, any explicit theory about the realizeable nature of man, *per se*. It would, at most, show something about the conditions needed, in at least some cases, for this realization: since a saving-vehicle would not be made manifest unless it were needed in at least certain cases. That certain Theologians would argue this (or some) saving-vehicle to be necessary in all cases of potential realization is an issue I shelve for the moment, since it relates to the above exclusivist claim in a way I'll deal with later. It is not anyway presently to the point, which is,— whatever, finally, one believes about Necessary Incarnations, these latter are always presented as an aid *to* realization *of* the ultimate nature; and hence because the beings to whom they are presented manifest a level of realization, or self-expression, which is other than ultimate, they are *not* presented to man's ultimate nature. Necessary Incarnations, in other words, relate to man, the *sinful* creature, man, that is, who has "fallen, and come short", whose expression has *ceased to be*, or anyway, is not, that of the Light Divine shining from within.

The man to whom Christ, the Servant Messiah, relates is *fallen* man, man who has *lost* innocence, man who has been *cast out* of Paradise—man, in other words, whose expression once was one with God, once was simply a shining forth of the Light Divine from within. All of which suggests, (indeed —if *avatāras* have visited—*entails*) man, the fallen-one, to be, in his *potential* nature, a vehicle for Divinity, to be a creature whose full realization *is* Divinity, whose possibilities can attain to a modicum of Man-Godness. And if a modicum, then this entirely: for God is no being of bits.

If, then, man is potentially a vehicle for Divinity, then he is ultimately so in the only sense which matters for the First Mode of Man-Godness in question: for then, man fully realized, *is* Divinity. And Mode One ultimately says no more. Every man, says Mode One, is ultimately God which, given the only value that matters, amounts to the confession that man, the finite creature, can realize himself as Divine; can, put simply, conduct himself such that his every expression becomes simply a shining forth of the Light Uncreated,[1] and his every deed, that of Wisdom and Truth. This said, everything of importance is admitted: for it matters little *then* whether one speaks of the

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[1] See Al-Ghazzali; *Niche For Lights.*

"unregenerate" state in symbols of "God within, but clouded"—as much of the Mystical Orthodoxy of all traditions does—or those of "God banished from within, earnestly seeking re-entry"—as the Non-Mystical Orthodoxy, and the Devotional (*Bhakti*) Centred Mystical Orthodoxy, of all traditions do.

What is more, the number of possible Necessary Incarnations, and why any, or this number, at all, are now clearly seen to be simply different questions from how many realizable, or actual, God-filled men there may be (and if "God-*filled*", then God: for God is not of bits). These doctrines are different *in essence.* So even should an Orthodox Christian feel obliged to a certain specific opinion about the number of actual Saving-Incarnations, this need in no way oblige him to a parallel view about the number of God-filled men there must be. Christ may have proven the only Man-God sent down to "redeem" *fallen* man (or, some fallen men); but in no way would this have shown Him to be the only Man-God, or the only being potentially or realizably so. Indeed, redemption could be seen precisely to be *back to* man's "original" Godly state[1]—this time, not in innocence, but in knowledge. For Eden cannot be entered again.

Now though the Second Mode, when put by those who hold to it, often confuses the above two doctrines, it need not, and can, when seen as a statement about the ultimate or realizable nature of man, be embraced as in all essentials similar to the First Mode. Indeed, there are scriptural sanctions for it being so.

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[1] "When one is extremely tranquil, then the Heavenly Light is given forth. He who emits this Heavenly Light sees his Real Self. He who cultivates his Real Self achieves the Absolute."
—Chuang Tzu; Ch. XXIII.

But before quoting these, an enlightening introit to them are the following words about the *Jīvanmukta* or Man-God doctrine of Hinduism, one exposition of the First Mode, put in language which clearly could come from the Second. Indeed, there has certainly been some borrowing, a fact which merely strengthens my suggestion that nothing of substance *need* separate that which is spoken of in these modes, so far as they refer to man's realizable nature. These words are from a thinker whom many consider to be the greatest of contemporary Hindu theosophers, *Mahāmahopādhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj*. The *Jīvanmukta*, or "living-released" man, "is then said to be converted or regenerated into a God-Man".[1] He is the being whose *Prajnācakṣuḥ* (Eye of Wisdom) is wholly open, so that his *every expression* is that of *Prajnājyotiḥ* (Light of Wisdom). And so, continues Kaviraj,

> "Being himself saved, he now becomes, if he so desires, the saviour of humanity; and he may also participate in the government of the world or else he may live in eternal and blissful communion union with the Lord, forgetful of all besides Him. He may even merge forever (or for a definite time) his self-identity in the Absolute and obtain the peace of *Nirvāṇa*. There are infinite possibilities of a trans-natural life,

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[1] Gopinath Kaviraj; "The Doctrine of Pratibhā In Indian Philosophy"; *Aspects of Indian Thought*; University of Burdwan; 1966; pp. 43-44.

> and no two souls need be exactly alike in their destiny, though all may be said to have reached *in one sense* the same Beatific Goal. So long as he is in earthly life either before the falling off of the body or on the voluntary resumption of such life subsequent to his physical death, the virtues of Love and Faith are exemplified in him in their noblest aspects. He is the Ideal of Perfect Humanity which is Divinity itself in a concrete shape and is the source of light and life and joy to the world, deep in darkness and sorrow. It is from him that the 'Scriptures' proceed and the world receives guidance and inspiration."[1]

Parallels with Christian expressions about "Man Who Is God", or "God, Incarnate", are obvious; and I move now to sanctions for these suggested parallels from, this time, within Christian scriptures.

In supposedly reporting a prayer from the lips of Jesus the Christ—and its baffling profundity leaves me in little doubt about the authenticity of the Christ *spirit* it expresses—John has these much misconstrued words:

> "Not only for these (i.e., his disciples) do I pray, but also for those who believe through their word in me—*that all things may be one* (*ina Bantes en osin*), as you, Father, (are one) in me and I in you, so that they also should be in us, in order that the world might believe that you have sent me.
>
> I have given to them the glory which you gave to me, *that they may be one as we are one. I am*

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[1] Kaviraj; op cit; pp. 43-44.

one in them and you are one in me, that they may become perfectly one; that the world might know you have sent me, and have loved them just as you have loved me."[1]

The complexities here are too many and obvious; but one thing only need detain us here—the "At-One-With" or "Assimilated Unto" mode of expression, whose frequency I have stressed with italics. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest an "At One-With" or "Assimilated Unto" *theosophy* present here as well.

Now of course the author does say more. And many have tried to denigrate, even to ignore, the few verses in question, on no better grounds than that they appear to clash with the "more" said by St. John. But this clearly begs the question. We cannot dismiss the "Assimilative Theosophy" evidently here merely on the *a priori assumption* that there can be no such thing in Christian scripture. Assuming it *must* be other than what it appears to be is no proof that it *is* thus "other".

But Paul is even more explicit. Addressing the Christians at Corinth, he remarks: "Don't you know that you are God's home (*naos*—"dwelling place", especially in the sense of *sanctum sanctorum*), and the Spirit of God lives in you? If anybody corrupts God's home, God will destroy him; for God's home is holy (*ágios*), and you are that home."[2] And remembering that the essence of the Godhead must be One "with" "the Spirit of God", being indwelt by the Spirit of God (i.e., being His

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[1] John 17:20-23.

[2] 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

"*naos*") cannot be other than being indwelt by God.

So then, both of the above do seem most naturally understood as expressions pertaining to Man-God in Mode One. I can see little need to interpret them otherwise.

V. **Christ and Other Avatāras**

Finally, to return to the theme with which the previous section began—the tendency within Christianity to claim an exclusivist soteriology. Why this should be is clear. I have already mentioned one or two sociological reasons. But there is a different, no doubt more crucial reason related to the doctrinal conflation mentioned earlier. For this tendency clearly stems, not, as may sometimes seem, from a properly examined doctrine of man, but from the dogma that Christ is the only saving-Incarnation. I have deliberately switched to the term "dogma" here to suggest a certain pejorative tone; not because adhering to the conviction that "redemption is through Christ alone" is reprehensible. It is not. But because this conviction is often, perhaps usually, given a certain construction I'll mention in a moment which certainly is; and given it, more's the pity, by "the best", those who, in Yeat's phrase, are wholly and *solely* "full of passionate intensity".

So then, the normative (I shun the word "Orthodox" here) Christian view that Christ is the only, or only adequate Saving-Incarnation, being itself an exclusivist claim, harbours the danger of a far more nefarious dogma of exclusion—a dogma, denigrating the saving-value of other traditions on the ground of the undoubted saving-value, *for some*, of this one. It harbours this danger of its very nature, but need not do more—need not, that is, do more than merely *harbour*. To say to a person, reared in the Christian tradition, knowing no other, and to whom this tradition is congenial—a person, that is, in need of a saving-vehicle—that "Christ is the only way to salvation", may well be true—in that Christ may very well be the only way for *him*. But to indulge the Western philosopher's fondness for generalization, and proceed to conclude it true in a second sense—that Christ is the *only vehicle possible for all*, *always*—is not merely being extremely arrogant, but also to make a fundamental blunder. For knowing whether any particular saving-vehicle meets the needs of a particular situation involves knowing both the needs, and the nature of that situation. Accordingly, it is impossible to conclude that a saving-vehicle, appropriate to one situation, *must* be appropriate to another, unless these needs and this nature be known. And it clearly is absurd for any mere man to claim to have this information about all situations, all cultures, all people, at all times. This, God only knows. And since Christ, the Ineffable Son, is, *qua* Necessary Incarnation, mere means and not the Divine End, one thing we, as mere (though inspired) men *can* affirm is the wholly sensible possibility—indeed, *because* of the patent differences of situation and of people, *high probability*—of the "ways" being multiple, and many others than merely Christ.

Finally, though, the fruits of the Spirit speak for themselves, and not the works of men. And if the two Modes differ only in the saving-vehicles they confess; and if it is further clear, as clear it is, that the fruits of the Spirit shine through the lives of members--"saintly" members—of all traditions, *such that* the *sole* difference is the *avatāra* or symbol through which this level of enlightenment were achieved: then this would seem a distinguishing mark which makes no difference. For the *end* and *aim* is enlightened sanctification, a full realization of Man-Godhood: the *means* to it is a wholly dispensable vehicle, of no *fundamental* importance. Naturally, Christ will be the only means for some. But if there are others who achieve this *end without* the Christian vehicle, there clearly must be other means than this.

3

THE MICROCOSM MAN IS

"The individual *māyā* associated with the *jīva* is not in essence different from the cosmic or collective *māyā* associated with *Īśvara*. The macrocosm and the microcosm are in reality one. Likewise, consciousness associated with *Īśvara* is in reality the same as consciousness associated with *jīva*. It is all one and the same consciousness."

Swami Nikhilananda, on Śankara's *Ātma-Bodha.*

"For all things which have been created by God, in their diverse natures, are brought together in man, as in a melting pot, and form in him one unique perfection—a harmony composed of many different notes."

St. Maximus the Confessor.

"Man, this greater world in little compass, is the epitome of all that exists in a unity and is a crown of the Divine Works."

St. Gregory Palamos.

"The universe is a big man, and man a little universe."

A *Sufic* saying.

I. The Thesis

Few things are more perplexing about the teachings of the Spiritual Masters than the claim, made overtly by many, implied by most, but explained by few, that man is a microcosm of the macrocosm —or, as it is sometimes put, that man is *the measure* of all things, the Universe, writ small. Perplexing, because in its most obvious and immediate understandings to the modern mind, it is plainly false. To the plain, no nonsense, modern man, it seems simply senseless, or at least wrong to say that the human creature *is* the Cosmos, albeit in some sense miniaturized, or even a tiny copy.

And indeed, this is so. Man is not the Universe, micro-scaled. This, the plain-man's intuition, is quite right. The doctrine in question has nothing whatever to do with shrinking the Cosmos to somehow fit it inside man. That would be nonsense. Certainly "the Cosmos, shrunk inside" is no accurate picture of what man *is*. The Cosmos is all that is manifest, and man, the creature, is only a bit.

Moreover, this "bit" that man, the observable, is—or that "all mankind" is—is not a mere random "bit" but *a part*. Man, or mankind, is a non-duplicatable, integral part of the entire, broader fabric of the Cosmos, with its unique part to play. Hence, "man, the observable" cannot have a tiny replica of the Cosmos inside him, since, by definition, he is in his entirety but a part of this coherent whole, the Cosmos. And something whose being is entirely a part of a thing cannot have a tiny copy of that whole thing as part of its being. If a cog is *merely* a cog, it cannot also be a photograph of a cog, not to mention of the whole machine.

One thing is clear then: man, *the observable* is not a microscaled replica of the whole of which he forms a part. Moreover, it is obviously false to suggest he has, or has a picture of, the Universe, writ small within. From which it follows that if man is a microcosm, it must be in virtue of being other than "man, the observable"; and if he has a microcosm within, it must be in some sense other than as an image of the Cosmos as observable.

To repeat, then, the doctrine in question has nothing whatever to do with shrinking the viewable Cosmos to man-size within. What it does have to do with I want now to look at. Indeed, I intend to illustrate why, if we accept a certain pre-condition, man *must* be a microcosm of the macrocosm.

II. The Divine Argument

(i) The Argument must begin, as I have said, with a certain pre-condition. Once it is put, and embraced, the conclusion—*that man must be a microcosm of the macrocosm*—follows very simply. What is more, unless this pre-condition is accepted, nothing else about the Spiritual can begin to be. The question at issue couldn't arise, as indeed it does not for the Spiritual infidel. And so, though I will merely state the condition in question and not otherwise defend it, unless accepted—for *whatever* reason—the issue in question would seem of little consequence.

But of course, speaking as I am to those for whom this puzzle is real, I must be talking to those who do accept the conditions necessary for its being so. Hence, that I shall for now merely state this condition matters little since, on this at least, I must be preaching to the converted. This does not worry me, for even did I not suspect this to be one of the few teaching-deeds these *Kali-Yuga* days can sanction as worthwhile, the converted would nonetheless remain at least *one* legitimate audience.

The condition in mind is simply put, namely: that man "contains" the Divine, or the Light Divine, "within". An obvious metaphor, since Divinity is only "within" man from *man's* standpoint, and not really, not, that is, from that of Divinity *per se*. Divinity is boundless, so cannot be "contained". That aside remarked, I will persevere with this metaphor as a helpful symbolic gateway to the truth I wish to clarify. This condition is necessary for talking about the Spiritual in any way, for only Divinity (or Spirit) can respond to, know, recognize or understand Divinity (or Spirit), since Divinity is defined as qualitatively transcendent of that which isn't Divine; and man, the merely observable, is not.

(ii) Now, the first deduction from this is that inwardly man *is* Divinity. Since Divinity, being transcendently One, cannot be chipped into bits, not even bits of an infinite number, wherever It is at all, It is entire.

If man can be said to have a semblance of Spirit, to "enshrine" a similitude of Divinity, of the Light Divine, "within", it must be that man inwardly *is* Divinity. And a convenient way of saying this, a way which need no longer be thought misleading, is that "*man* is Divinity", "*man* is Spirit". It is precisely thus that both Eckhart and Boehme are prepared to say, "I am God", indeed, that Christ said, "I and the Father *are* One": thus that *Vedānta* teaches that "Ātman *is* Brahman", that Al-Ghazzali claims the Knower *to be* the Light Divine (as exemplified by The Prophet)[1], and that Lao Tze pronounces the Sage *to be* Tao.

(iii) The second deduction then is that man must be what Divinity is. This is a simple point, and needs little further unfolding. Since man *is* Divinity, being "Spirit, inward", all that Divinity is, man must also be.

The one proviso here is a usual warning about Divinity and language I'll henceforth take for granted. Briefly, all language originating with man, as merely *human* being, must, when applied to realms Divine, be transcendental in thrust, and hence, never descriptive in content, but rather *performative* in some sense. The point is simple. Language made by man in terms of his merely *human* vision can only describe *that* vision; can only be used to convey a picture of properties of the *human* world. Accordingly, if it is used to talk about things beyond him—for instance, the Divine—two things are clear: (i) that the user of language in this way is not man, the merely *human* being, but man *in his Divinity*, and (ii) this exercise must be a case of language used to perform some task, rather than *describe* some thing.

This Divine Performance—for Divine it is, both in its doer, and what's done—will normally be, either the symbolic one of pointing someone in a certain direction such that, if he goes where he's directed, he (hopefully) achieves a certain trans-

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[1] See especially Al-Ghazzali's *Mishkat Al-Anwar*, "*The Niche For Lights*", tr. W.H.T. Gairdner; *Ashraf*; Lahore; 1952. Also his *Risālat Al-Laduniyya*, tr. M. Smith; "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society"; 1938. I quoted at length from this in the first essay.

(human)—language understanding, and so in some way grasps the Divine; this, or the ritualistic one of evoking a certain "transcendent presence" through certain linguistic structures which have in fact proved themselves sanctified in this way. And whilst it is by no means true that all our language is merely human (and I am presently speaking of *verbal* language only), indeed, pretty certain to be false, man *being* Divine *as well as* human, this warning, though only about language *human* in origin, is nonetheless important. For certainly much, if not most, of our verbal-language is human, so when used of Divinity, symbolic or ritualistic.

Paul Tillich, possibly the greatest Theologian of recent Protestant Christendom, remarks that, "The statement that God is being-itself is a non-symbolic statement. It does not point beyond itself... However, after this has been said, nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic ...Therefore, if anything beyond this bare assertion is said about God," he continues, "it is indirect, and it points to something beyond itself. In a word, it is symbolic."[1] And whilst it seems to me, both that the exception Tillich notes is not an exception —for the phrase "being-itself" seems to me very much of human origin—, and that there nonetheless *are* exceptions *not* noted by Tillich (who fails to acknowledge a distinction between language of human, and of Divine, origin), the general gist of these words do convey the major part of my meaning.

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[1] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 264-265; *Nisbet & Co*; Herts, Great Britain; 1953.

Perhaps I should illustrate what I mean by "language of Divine origin", as this is bound to be a contentious suggestion. What I *mean* is clear, and examples are pretty ready to hand. I mean, utterance which does not, and cannot, speak about any part of our human world, or function as a grammatically significant speech-part in so speaking, but which rather functions sensibly as a verbal expression regarding Divinity. And "regarding", either in the sense of evoking it, or of *being* the verbal aspect *of* Its Self-Expression. More obvious instances of language which, in fact, have only ever functioned in this way are, "Yahweh", the English transliteration of the mysterious Hebrew Tetragramaton, or four letters used to "name" the unnamable God, and "OM" or "A-U-M", the sound most sacred to Hinduism, whose written cipher, "ॐ", bears no relation whatever to Sanskrit, or the script of any other natural language. The general example of Glossolalia, the Christian phenomenon of "talking in tongues", may prove another example, but this would need to be examined. At least it is an instance of an entire language (languages?) *claimed* to be Divine in origin.

(iv) Finally, to take an important, rather idiosyncratic instance of human language used sacredly —"existence", or "is", used in Divinity's regard. As I've noted, "being-itself" is the one term sometimes used of Divinity which Tillich believes—and he is not alone—to be literally meant, and non-symbolic. Which appears to suggest that he might think "being" plausibly to be so also. I do not find this plausible, in part because "being" is not an obvious instance of Divine-language but, I would think, clearly human in origin. The verb "to be" and its cognates must be the *most* commonplace in most natural languages. And whilst it is true that "being" has become a jargon to Existentialists who *distinguish it from* "existence", this merely compounds confusion, since, in common parlance, "existence" and "being" are synonyms. Normally, to say "God exists" is to say He "is"; and "is", in this locution, is third-person-singular of the verb "to be". And so, to address the locution, "Divinity exists" or "is".

Firstly, Divinity does not "exist" if this means to "stand out" (*ex* and *stare*) against other, likewise existing things. To say something "is" is usually to entail there are other things it "is not". And God, or Divinity, is not one thing among others. There is nothing Divinity "is not", not for the pantheistic reason that It "is" everything, but because in this sense of "is"—the commonplace sense of *ex-stare*—there is nothing It "is".

To the Wayfarer, then, Divinity is that "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*), "extinction" (*nirvāṇa*), "release (*from* existence)" (*mokṣa*) from which all existing things come forth. It is not one existing thing among others; though it may prove helpful sometimes to view It as the *principle* of existence, as existence *in esse.* Accordingly, saying It "is" or "exists" is a use of human language to perform a certain task —normally the task of shorthand symbol for such phrases as "is defined as existence *in esse*", or, to be longerwinded, "is defined as the ultimate principial explanation of the origin, nature, and continuing existence of all that is". And that everything *has* an ultimate explanation—one which emerges finally, when all the relevant research and investigation has been done—an ultimate explanation for its being and form, and for its continued being, is beyond doubt. It is not perhaps *logically* necessary, in one of the Modernist uses of this term. It is not, that is, *impossible to imagine or conceive* something not having an ultimate explanation for its being or form. This would be to hold such a thing to have no explanation whatever, to hold it *simply to be* what it now is, or whenever it was thought to have "begun", if, indeed, it even *is* so "thought"; to hold, indeed, that it was "begun" or caused *by* nothing.

Some Modernist philosophers have seriously said this—like David Hume and Bertrand Russell-though not about *continuing* existence. That some reason, and therefore some ultimate reason, some reason beyond which it is not possible to go, since it explains the fact in question (continuing existence), can always be found for *this*, is rarely doubted. Which commits one to the odd position that, whilst continuing existence can always be explained, the fact of initial existence cannot be.

About this, it is worthy of note that even those who try to escape the fact of "Creation" or Emanated Manifestation", with the certainly *odd* suggestion that nothing began, this finite world having existed eternally, or having somehow suddenly "begun", have not really escaped the commitment they seek to avoid—that there must be some Transcendent Reality, or Divinity, to ultimately explain *the fact of* existence, and to supply its "beginning" with ontologically sufficient prior conditions. The above Moderns have not escaped this commitment, or not in the way they imagine, for the very questions they seek to avoid must now be asked of *continuing existence*: questions like, what, ultimately, explains the operation of the continuance? how can it be? what are those principles, mastery of which, would enable us to understand this fact, and, could we operate with them, give us further mastery over this "continuance" itself ? Going round these questions by denying—and merely denying, which is not disproving—that there was a "beginning", or that if there was, this involves no ontologically sufficient antecedent or pre-condition, is merely coming back to them another way. For interpreting "continuance" involves addressing these very same questions.

But now, to speak more generally about this Modernist objection, two comments. Firstly, to say it is possible to imagine or conceive something is to say *only* that—that something can be imagined or conceived. Moreover, that something can be imagined or conceived *by the human mind*, or by some human minds. It is, firstly, not to show that what is imagined is believeable, not that any claim based upon its denial is *not* beyond doubt. It makes a point merely about the limits and possibilities of human imagination; and that of itself shows nothing about any Reality *other than* these limits and possibilities. A dogma of Modernist Western logic is, "If imaginable (i.e., image-able) by the human mind, then possible. If not imaginable, then not possible." And it would, I think, be hard to find a better example of the arrogant, almost blind faith in the mental (*ergo*, rational) powers of humanity than this. This is sheer dogma for which there can be no sanction whatever. And holding to it is stubborn acquiescence, not wisdom in light of the evidence. For the fallible weakness man, the merely *human* being, is—and hence his mental powers—shows itself to us all. And whilst we might with humility confess we appear to have *only* this humanity, in its frailness—ignorance, then, not arrogance—mostly those who speak thus (that reason seems all we finally have) believe that it, or some other aspect of our mere humanity, does reliably yield insight into Reality's ultimate nature. Which is to cling, inconsistently, to a citadel of sand. For if our powers are fallible, even within their own limits, they are certainly not equal to assessment of possibilities beyond these limits. Briefly, if we are humble about reason, and other human knowledge-getting powers, such as sense-experience, and agree they are flawed, much more is it true that we have no ground whatever for concluding even their more successful usages—however one would assess that—yield insight into Reality's ultimate nature. To do this we must *assume* these limits *are* the limits of realness : and that's an assumption which cannot be examined *within* these limits, hence with these powers, even were they reliable in themselves.

But secondly, and despite Modernist Logicians, it seems to me doubtful that more than a tendentious handful ever seriously do, or ever could find it possible seriously to, doubt that the shape and bare existence of everything has some, and therefore some *ultimate*, explanation. The Spiritual and Physical Sciences both are founded upon this premiss. And without any question, everybody *lives* this belief, or in terms of it. The essence of Spiritual growth is the quest for explanation.

And so, with a proviso about Modernist logic—though only a tiny one, isolated to a tiny tendentious few who need be shown scant credence[1]—that the being and form, and continued being of everything has, ultimately, an explanation is an innocent claim, doubted by none. And sofar as Divinity is *defined* merely as this, there can be little quarrel. On the other hand, that these ultimate explanations are what Divinity is said to be on *other* grounds, what, in other words, Divinity, as already in some other way defined, is said to be, is most clearly far from innocuous. That "God made the world"(to use a piece of poetry) is far from merely saying that the world was made, for this, the former, is to say two extra things: (i) that everything made has *a single* explanation to which it can be traced, and (ii) that this "single explanation" is *everything else* the Divine is otherwise said to be.

But of course, to the Wayfarer—and he it is alone to whom the puzzle at issue truly is a puzzle, or even a possible question—"Divinity" is a term which stretches far wider than merely "ultimate explanation". It is a term for that Ultimate Principle in which the Reality of everything is invested, its source and sustainer. That there is One Single Principle, "performing" this cosmic investiture, the only aspect of Divinity relevant here, is no mere prejudice of a certain kind of man (the Spiritual) but, *to that man*, clear knowledge.

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[1] That these "few" have had, and continue to have, so huge an influence in academic places, despite the glaring dangers, and unproven foundations of their systems, is no surprise. We live in a Modern World; that is, a world where not only are Modernist assumptions the only ones acceptable, but any assumption which *is* Modernist often is acceptable merely for being so. The dogmas of an age control its commerce.

Moreover, some such *belief* as this, for here it is not knowledge, inspires most science. For most of the Sciences, and I have in mind especially the Physical Sciences, despite Modernist infiltration, continue to harbour the hope of uncovering a *single* principle, or whatever, explanatory of the nature and behaviour of its entire subject-matter.

This latter, about the Sciences, is merely an indicative fact. The former, about the Spiritual Man and his knowledge, is far more. It is, indeed, the clue to a very central part of any authentic Spiritual investigation; namely, that very beginning part, called *śravana* (hearing) and *manana* (reflection) by the *Advaita* tradition of Hinduism, which in large measure is an open listening to, then critical reflection upon, claims to knowledge made by wise men. For these are claims made by people who are *defined* as being those who know what it is for *any* claim to *be* so, that is, one to "knowledge". Behind this definition is, of course, the *empirical* claim that there are people whose knowledge is superior, namely, those we, and *for this reason*, call "wise". This is the nature of sageness, and whilst there *actually being* people who fit this description is, let me stress again, an *empirical* issue, again, it's one we need take no further here, for the Wayfarer has, of necessity, resolved it in favour of there being so.

So then, of people accepted as sage, the assumption must be very strongly in favour of there being support, of the normal sort, for any knowledge they may claim to have. But the hard work of furnishing this support must await another time: for the move now relevant to add to our Argument is that, *Divinity is the Ultimate Principle in which the Reality of all things is invested.* So that it's appropriate, and no longer misleading, to remark Divinity *to be* the realness of things, *per se.* In this sense, all that is, ultimately is Divine. Which is not to claim, indeed to deny that how things *appear* to the non-sage reflects Divinity. Divinity is not equatable with Its own manifestations, even though, in the above *principial* sense, all manifestation *is* Divinity. It is Divinity *en arché*, or "in principle". Divinity is its *realness-bestowing principle.*[1]

(v) Our next deduction is simple. (iii has shown that man must be everything Divinity is—remembering, of course, that saying "Divinity *is*" is either to talk of Divinity by metaphor, or to use shorthand for some meaning betokened or referent evocable. Briefly again: being defined as "that which explains and sustains the being and form of all that is, ultimately", Divinity cannot be one among those beings It thus explains, cannot, that is, be, or be part of, "all that is". It "is", either by metaphor, a metaphor meant to stand for something else, or to teach in some way, or in the sense of being the "essential origin" of is-ness, that "emptiness" from which things come forth.

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[1] Compare these words from the Taoist sage, Chuang Tzu. "Affirmation and negation alike blend into the infinite One. Hence it is said there is nothing better than to see things through the Light." *Creativity & Taoism*; Chang C.Y; *Julian Press*; New York; 1963.

Chang comments: "To see things through the Light is not only to blend opposites into one, but it is *to enter into the unity of all things.*" Page 36. Italics mine.

Notwithstanding, Divinity can be said to "exist" in Its manifestations; that is, there is a sense in which this is true, namely, that sense in which manifestation only has realness in Divinity. There is Divine *līlā*. But to put this initially in a somewhat cryptic way, this is rather to say that existence is only *real* in Divinity, and not that Divinity really exists. To repeat this, de-mystified: knowing existence *really* is going beyond it to Divinity—this is *always* true. Whereas knowing Divinity really is getting to It *through* existence—though this is *only* true for those who are existence-bound to begin with. The first is a logical truth, the second, an empirical one about *certain* beings. But because these "certain beings" include all non-sage, unenlightened manifest ones, this mere empirical truth is likely more important to us than the invincible *logical* one. For mostly, indeed, overwhelmingly mostly, we are non-sage and unenlightened. All Wayfarers are, perforce. For being on the Way (*jñāna-marga*; "wisdom-path") entails being other than wholly en-wisdomed, other than *buddha*-d (which literally means "awakened").

To us, or most of us, then, knowing the Ultimate realness Divinity is involves going *through* existence, for existence is, at present, the mode of our understood realness. The Divinity in us—and which we are—we know *of*, but have not awakened fully to. And since this "awakening" is an expanding or transcending of our present consciousness, it must in the first instance (that is, for the present) be in terms of this consciousness; so, in and through the terms of existence. Accordingly, then, knowing Divinity will at least often be *via* the vehicle of some Incarnation. This is expressed in Hinduism through the doctrine of *avatārās*, or Divinity, made Incarnate for this explicit reason. As the *Bhagavad Gītā* remarks:

"paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṃ
vināsāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasaṃsthāpanārthāya
saṃbhavāmi yuge-yuge." (*B.G.*, IV:8).

"For protection of the path of righteousness,
and for destruction of evil-doers,
for the purpose of causing *Dharma* to stand firm,
I come into being, age after age."[1]

This is of course also why the *śiṣya* (Wayfarer as *sadhaka*, or Spiritual Student) often is urged to view his *guru*, who must enlighten others *to be* their *guru*, simply *as* "God", simply *as* "Divinity, incarnate". For this way, the teaching is effected.

But again, we must not stray too far from our central concern. The above distinctions are noted only to aid understanding of the doctrines in question beneath; beneath, that is, the Traditional Teaching I am striving to expound. And so, our fourth deduction is this: that, being everything Divinity is, man *must* in like manner be all manifestation. Quite as the reality of all manifestation, of the entire cosmos, *is* Divinity, so is it man. Man is, in other words, manifestation *en arché* its reality-bestowing principial source.

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[1] Compare *Bhagavad Gītā*, *III*, 21-24; *IV*, 6-7.

We have reached this conclusion with but two assumptions, both accepted, of necessity, by the Wayfarer.

(vi) Now though the Argument is before us, its explication is by no means over. For, whilst we have demonstrated that *man must* be all macroscopic manifestation in a manner akin to the Divine, to some it may still seem true that, as well as being "all there is" in this fashion, he is also *merely a bit* of what there is. And though seeing a puzzle here is of course a simple blunder, reverting to the very first mistaken interpretation spoken of—that being a microcosm means having the manifest universe shrunk miniscule within—it does highlight a need to say more.

This clarity I will effect by putting the fifth deduction. I want now to turn from the Godward-side, or from that "side" exclusively, and, having now put the Argument which gives clarity and sense to the following, talk of *man*, *the paradox*, man, the Divine Creature, the conjunction of contradictories, intelligible only to the Wayfarer.

If I oddly view myself as at once—and I mean "at once" and not "both"—a veritable fragment of the cosmos, yet also Divinity, I thereby entail, both as part of what is said, and in the very fact of being able so to see myself, that my *epistemic* or knowledge-getting capacities must, ontologically, parallel those of Divinity.

That man, the Divine, has Divine capacities is naturally true. But here I mean more: that a sense is open for saying the same of man, the Creature, where "Creature" means more than merely "observable creature"—where it means, "man in his full created glory". I am talking now of man as neither merely the thing created, observable to sense, nor as the uncreate Divinity he also is, distinct from this sense-thing, created. But as the paradox, or mystery—in the literal sense of "hidden" from understanding based on natural logics—of being Divine Creature, being, that is, *at once*, and in the same substance, Creaturely Divinity.

I cannot of course *establish* this mystery using natural logics, and can, at best, give hints which hopefully will illumine those who are puzzled by it, as, of course, the Wayfarer will not be. I have in mind that sense in which Christianity speaks of Christ, not merely as "true man and true God", but as "the Word become flesh", or "the Spirit, made flesh, to dwell among us", meaning in each case no dualism, but a phrase denoting, sofar as we with our human understanding-limits can hope to grasp it, *a single, integrated being*. Christ was no "man, the creature" somehow glued to "God, the Creator", but simply "*Man-God*". And *understanding* this about Christ, or about other men, is not something I can aid, except in one way: I can use words, *meaning* this, which make undeniable sense. Whether this sense is then held further to *connote* how things are rests, not with grasping any *argument* I might advance, but with following the *guidance* of these sense-making words, and *tasting* this "understanding" for oneself. Christian- ity is undeniably right in this: that the *fact* of

Christ, *as Man-God,* is understandable only by those who, in some sense, "know" him.

This is likewise true of all enlightened, or *buddha*-d men. Grasping the nature of their being cannot merely be grasping an argument since, to the eyes of "argument", or to the limits of natural logics, that which is claimed of such beings is at least paradox, and often, it seems, contradiction also. Christ, as Paul said, was "foolishness" to the Greeks, *precisely because*, sofar as their cool logics allow, Divinity cannot be incarnate. Carnalness is finite, and perishes: Divinity is infinite, and does not. This, the logics of Aristotle (especially, though perhaps not only) must be taken *by the Greeks* to establish.

And this, the *buddha*-d man will swiftly point out, is circular. For "para-doxa" incarnation of Divinity may be; in that it may prove a suggestion which goes against, or runs counter to, the normal ways of talking, or of thinking. But running counter to what's normal is no guarantee of falsehood, a truth to which Aristotle's teacher's own teacher, Socrates, bore most eloquent witness. He was put to death because the wisdoms he voiced ran counter to common understanding. And of course, there once was a time when we all thought the world was flat.

On the other hand, though paradox, Man-Godhood's possibility is not *thereby* contradictory. Indeed, it's only this if we *first of all assume* that natural logics—ones either thrown-up by, or which are found to be the basis of, humanity's unaided powers of *ratio* (reason)—that these *must* be the touchstone for all realness. And this we can no more make as an assumption than that anything else *must* be its touchstone. The point is, realness merely is as it proves itself to be; quite as, by corollary, our powers of *testing* realness are as *they* prove themselves to be. And if a claim to truth, or to the presence of some realness, is made by someone on grounds of using powers he maintains can show us truths which, as Pascal noted, "reason cannot know", it is merely circular to *dismiss* these claims *on the grounds that* they make nonsense, or a "contra-diction", to reason. For this may well be so—and perhaps is of Creaturely Divinity—but the claim is precisely that here is some realness, known only, perhaps, in some rather unusual way; some way not open to natural logics. And unless these logics, and reason, their exerciser, can prove *themselves* to be the touchstone in question—no doubt aided by the physical senses – then that there may be some other, or others, which, in certain special situations, alone can do the job, is something found out only by *doing* what we're told will evoke these powers, and present us with knowledge of this supra-rational realness. And of course, just this—use themselves to prove themselves infallible, or even merely the only available —is precisely what these logics, and reason, cannot do.

Accordingly, I have no qualms in affirming this perhaps paradoxical understanding of the nature of man: that he's *at once* Creature and Divine. I'm not even clear it's so paradoxical, and rather suspect it might only ring oddly in the minds of rationalist philosophers—who are scarcely a mirror of *common* speech and thought. And whilst I don't suggest the common-voice is always reliable, I don't deride it either. And I certainly do not think the rationalist philosopher *must* be assumed to be closer to truth when there's a clash between him and the commoner. That the Greeks found Christ "foolishness"—or, for that matter, the Jews, "a stumbling block" (for Christ, the Messiah to Christians, did not conform to their *traditional image* of a Saviour)—need convince no one of the wrong-headedness of beliefs those common folk *who'd met him* found unavoidable. For, in the first place, most of us mostly are far happier to learn about a person from someone who's *met him*, than from someone who hasn't, but is exercising inference (and other reason-techniques) on the basis of second (or worse)-hand information, to make truth-claims. And mostly this is true, no matter how brilliant the inferencer is. But more importantly, if these claims to other, supra-reason methods have substance—and only doing what those, the saints and sages, who make these claims advise will show in what way they do—, and if, moreover, they are said *precisely to be* methods appropriate for understanding Divinity, it should not be in the least surprising if they prove quite as common among men as *ratio* of the philosophers.

And if, as I think, and all Wayfarers would claim to know, they do, then this suggestion—man's being Creature and Divinity at once—would not even be paradoxical. At most it might be, as I think it is, until now *unnoted* by most: unnoted that in man, Creature and Divinity are one and the same, any distinction between them not being one of substance, but (if you like) one of *mode*. Man is not two things, joined together, but one thing, named twice. Of course, not only may this go unnoted, but even when recognized, through the exercise of appropriate powers, as a *sensible* suggestion, it may nonetheless be *unacceptable* to many-even, as I think is true today, to most. Most today, and despite the devastating inroads of rationalist philosophy, don't find Man-Godhood a nonsense; merely a falsehood, in fact. Something like this was Paul's meaning in calling Christ "a stumbling block" to the Jews. Since they had no deep worry in *making sense of* Christ's claimed Man-Godhood. Their history was too deeply mystical for that. Their "stumbling block" (according to Paul, at least) was merely the inability to accept the claim as true.

And likewise, saying man *is* this is not to say he always *knows* this of himself. As I've remarked, this sublime fact can, so tragically easily these *Kali-Yuga* days, go unnoted, even by most. A tragedy, for when it goes unnoted, then action is affected to our detriment, our peril. For if we don't know we're *at once* Divine and Creaturely, mostly this will be because we think we are *only* creatures. And if we think this, our deliberate action will never reflect the Divinity which, at the most deep level, we are *at once* with the Creaturely. That is to say—the Creatureliness we are which is *at one with* Divinity, is not the creatureliness we *take ourselves to be* in thinking we are *only* this. And we can, perhaps mostly do, wrongly *believe* we are *only* the latter. Knowing we are this other, *Man-God* or Creaturely Divinity, being a consciousness arrived at only through the supra-rational methods in question, is highly likely to go unnoted by many.

But two questions might be asked. It might be asked: "How can we *be* something, and not know so?" And to this, the answer is easy, for this happens all the time. We are constantly *discovering* things and capacities we didn't know we were or had. A more difficult question might be the follow-up to this reply: "But if I *am Man-God*, what is it for *me* to act *as if I* were not? And why is this tragedy?"

It's tragedy because doing this leads away from Enlightenment. That's matter of fact, attested to by all who *are* enlightened, all, that is, whom earnest Wayfarers recognize as "awakened". And as to what *it is* for "me" to act "*as if*" I am not what *really* I am, at least one or two simple things can be said. Firstly, that self-deception, or *mauvaise foi*, is quite as commonplace as not *knowing* fully what I am. The phenomenon of living in a "dreamworld" about myself, even of deliberately doing so, is fearfully common. And whatever *psychological*, or *spiritual* analysis we give of this fact, this is one clear sense in which *I* can act "as if" *I* were other than *I* am. A refusal to acknowledge my own-identity is common enough. And perhaps less so, though far from unknown, is a phenomenon so extreme theorists have named it, "*loss* of identity". Clearly, if it's important to live in terms of what one truly is—and though it may not always be, a later essay will argue it mostly is—acting in terms, either of identity-refusal or loss will *not* enable us to do so.

But secondly, and supplementing this simple fact about identity loss and refusal, which is scarcely more than a beginning here, the suggestion is still a simple one *to put*. Briefly, it's that "man, the Creature" is here said to be more than merely "man, the observable (with physical senses)". And when this "more" is fully appreciated, through the suprarational powers we've spoken of—and now it's appropriate to add that I have in mind those, the exercise of which Eastern traditions enjoin as leading to ultimate Enlightenment—when this is done, *only then* does the person, now fully awakened, *for the first time* appreciate, and so *for the first time* understand, the realness of his Man-Godhood. In other words, it is only "the awakened-ones", true "*buddhais*", those irrevocably enlightened, or in *mokṣa* ("release from limitations, including limited self-understanding)"), the Deified or Christified ones who, in actual fact, *clearly* know they are the mystery of Man-Godness, and what it *fully* means to be so. And, speaking quite as simply we can say: since it's perfectly possible never to reach this level of consciousness or self-understanding, it's in that measure possible to "live" so that one's true Man-Godness is never expressed, and hence so that only our inferior creatureliness, or that which we wrongly believe ourselves *in toto* to be, ever is. Naturally, it's highly likely—especially today—that we won't achieve that level of self-understanding which betokens true *buddhahood*; so, highly likely we will never live in terms of our Man-Godness. And *understanding* that is as simple as *understanding* the suggestion that there might be dimensions of our being we die without ever plumbing—surely a *simple fact* about almost every one of us.

Accordingly, I can see nothing, either logically odd or fundamentally unacceptable in this response to our second question; and so can see no puzzles about *making sense* of man, as Creaturely Divinity. The problem I have now raised is that of *understanding*, not *that* it can make sense, but rather quite *what* sense it makes: for this, I've freely confessed, only a person who fully understands himself, who *is* enlightened, can assuredly know. And what is important here is to realize this to be a *practical* problem, not one of theory. It is not the problem of understanding *that* things might make sense which only vaguely do so now, for that's no more puzzling than the possibility of your gaining understanding you presently don't have. And your *believing* there might be understandings here you don't presently have will of course be based on such simple facts as, those you accept as being sage or saintly, saying so. The problem, then, is not one of theory, but rather of simply doing those supposedly self-enlightening deeds enjoined by the tradition, its venerated writings and teachers. And that's both a simple problem to solve, and, being practical, no longer anything we, as theorists, can further resolve.

But one further thing can perhaps be said about this "enlightening self-knowledge": that it's not a mere matter of mental content, but far more a matter of *being the conscious expression of* what is here said to be known. It's not, for instance, as if Christ's, Ramakrishna's, or Gotama Buddha's knowledge of themself as *Man-God* were—as *all* knowledge is with us, as non-sage—a matter of some subject having this "knowledge" as object.

As I'll argue in a later essay, Enlightenment goes beyond "subject: object" distinctions. No. Christ's, Ramakrishna's, the Buddha's "knowledge" of themself *as Man-God was* the life they led. For this simply was "the Word, spoken", simply was "Divinity, expressed".

In God there is no gap between *conceiving* what He is, and *consciously expressing* this. To conceive, for God, is to be. "Knowledge", then, of this sort, or at this level of being, is in no way distinguishable from what, in our *human* language, we would speak of, either as "what's known" or (in this special case) as "what's known, lived". With us, there is often a threefold distinction between (i) being a subject who (ii) has "knowledge" as object, which subsequently in time (iii) gets expressed or "lived". These are all one in substance to Divinity: hence, all one is substance to man, enlightened.

This said, then, we may now move one step further in our Argument. We may now say it is necessary that what can be said of "man, the uncreate Divine" can be said quite as well, and in some the same way, of "man, the Creature". "Some the same way", since, to one level of understanding—the unsage, unenlightened level—it is often helpful to speak as above of a difference here in *mode*, a difference in the *mode* in which the One Reality expresses Itself. Whilst unsage and captive to that level at which *existence* is realness, we can have no inkling of any mode in which Divinity expresses Itself other than that of this, our manifest Cosmos. And speaking to, and so in terms of this mode, what now is being said is this: that, within man, as Creaturely Divinity, must be *appropriate representations of all ontological levels of existence*, and that, in *this* sense, man, the Divine Creature, microcosmically "mirrors" the macrocosm. Briefly, since his epistemic capacities must "mirror" those of Divinity, the *qualitative* or principial nature of these capacities—which can be seen as a hierarchy—must also "mirror" those of Divinity. Which is to say, must "mirror" that which ultimately is the realness of these varying dimensions, and hence *be* this realness, since It is One, and cannot really be "mirrored".

I remarked that these capacities can be seen as hierarchic. I refer to the doctrine, variously described as "the stations (mansions) of the Soul", "the ladder of Perfection", "the hierarchy of Lights" (Al-Ghazzali), and so on. The suggestion briefly is that, quite as the various levels of manifestation are closer to or farther from the Centre, or the Ultimate, so capacities for their grasping are more or less comprehensive, from the "physical senses" which grasp only one level—the "sensible", most "gross" and far removed of all—, to "the Intellect beyond mind" (*buddhi* or *noũs* beyond *manas* or *psyche*), which grasps not only the realm of Supra-Rational realness, but also all levels below it. In Al-Ghazzali's words:

> "Thus you see that the whole world is filled with the external lights of perception, and the internal lights of intelligence; also that the lower lights are effused or emanate the one from the other, as light enamates or is effused from a lamp; while the Lamp itself is the transcendental Light of Prophecy; and

> that the transcendental Spirits of Prophecy are lit from the Spirit Supernal, as the lamp is lit from the fire; and that the Supernals are lit the one from the other; and that their order is one of ascending grades; further that these all rise to the Light of Lights, the Origin and Fountainhead of lights, and that is ALLAH, only and alone; and that all other lights are borrowed from Him, and that His alone is real light; and that everything is from His light, nay, he is everything, nay, HE IS THAT HE IS, none but He has ipseity or heity at all, save by metaphor."[1]

Wonderful words which, of course, merely describe the hierarchy in question. But here is not the place to do more.

(vii) The Thesis—that man is a microcosm of the macrocosm—can now be seen as putting the suggestion that, within the "confines" of man, *qua* Creaturely Divinity, *qua*, that is, *Man-God*, there must be a principial presence of all ontological levels of manifestation. And if we accept that man *is* Divinity, and that, when enlightened (or awakened to his Man-Godhood) he will *know* so, this is of course no mere "suggestion" but a certain truth. Finally, as we have noted, this question—how man can be a microcosm of the macrocosm—could only arise and be a puzzle for one who has, on other grounds, accepted the pre-conditions for putting it; of which the major one is that man *is* inwardly Divine, that the Light in some perhaps very much obscured way—"as through a glass darkly"—shines in him. Accordingly, the Thesis, sensible as it will be only for the Wayfarer, has in the simplest of ways been established for him.

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[1] Al-Ghazzali, *Mishkat Al-Anwar*, p. 111. Compare pp. 115, 148-149, 154.

Two concluding comments are pertinent. Firstly, to repeat, there is here no *quantitative* comparison of "big" and "small". The claim is that various qualitatively identical ontological levels are, at once, "in" man, the Divine Creature, *and* "in the Cosmos". And though of course in one mode, his unenlightened creatureliness, man is "smaller" than the Cosmos he's said microcosmically to "reflect", the "in-ness" we are speaking of is not of this measurable kind but principial. The epistemic capacities of man, the Creaturely Divine, are, in their nature, beyond the reach of quantitative measurement; so any substance they are said to be "of", and any sense in which they are "in" him, must also be beyond such measurement.

Secondly, what this "principial presence" amounts to, beyond being a presence, in a manner sufficient to knowing the ontological level in question, of the substance of that level, is not a question into which I have gone. Though in one sense, the answer to it is clear: that the *manner* in which each ontological level is present, the *analysis* of these principial presences, will exactly parallel the *manner* and *analysis* of these "presences" "in" Divinity. So that, any further taking of this question depends directly on understanding the nature of one's Divinity, an end only adequately achieved on Enlightenment. This question, in other words, is not to be resolved by metaphysics, but alone in those *practical* manners appropriate to Enlightenment, or fully realized Man-Godhood.

4

SPIRITUAL LISTENING

1. Introduction

On two occasions I have asked the Swami Chinmaya for advice—not advice upon any specific matter but, *just advice.* I was seeking what a wise man, for Swamiji is certainly that, might say to me which, in the most general of ways, could be used to make me wiser, and perhaps a little better. This was a very tall order, just "advice" like that, about how an individual whom, in detail, he knew very little, might improve himself, Spiritually, might become more correct and less wrong.

But Swamiji, like all true Spiritual Masters, knew exactly what I meant, exactly what was needed, and on each occasion gave me a response in a single sentence which said it all. It is the first of these I want to share with you, and perhaps explain a little, in this note: the second I will speak about later, in another note. On the first occasion, which was, indeed, my first encounter with him some years ago in Hong Kong, he simply responded, raising a finger to his lips and gazing upwards —"Listen!"

Cryptic and strange? Not really. Really quite simple and supremely profound. Indeed, the mark of the great Master is exactly his ability to say in simple words the most profound of wisdoms, understood in *some* way, and in varying depths, therefore, by *everyone*. For the genius of simplicity is that *no one* feels the teaching beyond him, since everyone sees *some* point in the sayings. Not always the *same* point, and not always to the same degree of depth; but no one is neglected, so that everyone feels he belongs. There is nothing more simple than the Sermon on the Mount, yet nothing more profound. And the words of Ramakrishna and of Ramana Maharshi are the essence of simpleness; yet, to the wise, Light Divine shines through them almost blindingly. All great Masters have this incredible gift—to speak simply, yet deep, at once to all. And so, the advice—which applies I'm sure not merely to me, but to all (including the Swamiji himself)—"Listen!"

II. Listening

Listen, Yes, but, for what? For nothing—just, listen. And there's the secret, and the simplicity. For what is listening but holding attentive. And normally, when one is told to "listen", one knows to whom, and about what. So, one centres one's attention, and therefore, for those moments, the life-force of one's conscious person, to the person demanding and the subject-matter in question. That is, one gathers one's inward-energies to a point, and simply focuses them to a certain effect. That is the first thing about listening—a centring of inner-energy (*linga-śarira*, or subtle-body, energy, that is) to a particular end.

The second is like unto it: that listening demands a quieting and negating as much as possible, and sofar as relevant, of all *ego*-clamour. For when we listen, *we* are doing nothing, *we* are not asserting ourselves in any way; but, simply *waiting*, waiting to hear whatever is being spoken. So we, our egos (*aham kāra*, or "I"-maker), must stand very much in the background; firstly, because we are not doing anything, but simply waiting, and secondly, because any inner-rumbling, any wayward emotions or stray-thoughts, *any ego*-expression within the mind, is very likely merely to hinder and get in the way of our hearing clearly. And of course, the more attention demanded for what we have to hear, the more will *ego*-expression be merely a bother and hindrance.

And the third thing about listening follows from these: that listening, because it is centring of one's energies in simply waiting, and so, subduing the tendency to *ego*-expression—to do something, other than merely waiting, *oneself*—because it is this, it is an attitude of dependence upon what's being inwardly heard. We are simply in attendance upon whatever is being given. We don't choose what we hear: we wait, and are given it. I don't mean we *can't* choose what we hear, for the mind does play funny tricks: but these are psychological quirks, and sofar as they operate, are obviously instances of *ego*-expression which simply gets in the way of hearing clearly. If we are told simply to listen to what someone says, and we let our mind play these kind of filtering-selective tricks, then of course we have *not heard* what has been said. How much we hear depends upon the kind of tricks being played; and sometimes, though we kid ourselves to believe we are being attentive, we not only hear very little, but the little we hear is severely distorted. But when we are *really* listening, really doing what is asked of us here, our mind is playing no tricks, and being as attentive, and open, as the subject-matter demands. Perhaps this is very rare, but this and nothing else is truly listening.

So listening is three things: (i) a centring of inward energy for something to be heard, usually being attentive to some goal; (ii) a switching-off or putting away of *ego*-asserting, a *denial* of "I" activity while I merely wait; (iii) a waiting which is a dependence upon what is given when I listen. Now—and here we come to an important point, an important simplicity about the Swami's advice—all three of these conditions can be more or less *absolute*, more or less *total,* depending simply upon how much attention is needed for what is being heard, upon how much of my person I must hold steady and direct, or – which is better—hold simply *open and waiting* for what is coming in. Sometimes, as we know, we can listen quite adequately and here everything said with only half a mind, while, perhaps, thinking of something else (or being merely lazy or turned-off) with the other half. Some things simply are easy to hear, because they are trivial, non-complex, or in some other way, undemanding. On the other hand, some things seem to take all we've got just to hear them.

Some things demand that all our powers be focused, and none turned-off; and this can be for two kinds of reason. Firstly, because the voice that's speaking is hard to hear—perhaps it is speaking softly. And the second reason would be because what's being said is hard to *understand.*

Sometimes we find it very difficult, not merely to hear what's being said, but to follow it; hard, not so much to get the signals as to get the message. And sometimes, when we are asked to "listen"—in fact, most times, if you think about it—we are being urged not only to hear the sounds but to hear the message also. This is certainly always true when we are being asked to listen to something we are *told*; for then we are of course being spoken at in some language. And hearing a language is hearing what it says. Unless the language is foreign: and then, no matter how hard we listen we won't get what we are told—until we have mastered this language. And we all know how much we must strain to focus attention, to concentrate when trying to listen to something we're being told in a language which is not our own but, say, one we understand just a little of.

Now, the Swami's advice was to *simply* listen—not to listen to *something*, nor to direct energies in a special direction: but, just to listen. And listening like this, if we do it, and take it seriously, because it is *just listening*, without *any* qualification, is listening with all our person, is total, absolute listening: listening with no reserve, for the object is yet unknown, and may prove huger than we are. It is clearly stationing oneself with the attitude of *absolute openness*, waiting simply to be told. But one thing we must say now: it is not of course waiting with one's outer ears for any sounds, no matter what, which might come in from the world. Not that it *isn't* this, but rather that it is as we have said: an inward attitude, centring all the powers of one's person in waiting to hear, with *ego*-quelled stillness and selfless dependence, whatever is being said. And even listening with physical ears demands this, more or less. But the point is, when one is inwardly centred and open in this *absolutely* dependent, and *absolutely* selfless way, *then* the voice we do hear is not one from outside, but one from the heart. For these are precisely the conditions needed to hear, and to understand, and precisely the conditions which guarantee, *Divinity*—sheerly listening in this way: so simple, and yet so profound.

The Swami, in other words, has given us an overwhelmingly simple technique for approaching God-consciousness. And he could have said this. He could have said, "Listen to God", or "Listen to the whispers of Immortality", and not, as he did say, simply "Listen!" But what would have happened then? We immediately would have perverted the Message; for rather than simply, and without any *ego*-assertion, wait to hear the Message, rather than simply open our person completely and with no remainder to the incoming Voice That Speaks, we would have surely put there, in the place that should be empty and waiting, our own notion, or picture, of Divinity—*Brahman* (*Saguṇa*), *Īśvara*, *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu*, *Krishna*, *Ganapati*, *Lakśmi*, *Sarasvati*, *Sai Baba*, *Ramakrishna*, *Ramana Maharshi*, even the Swami himself. And this would be another case of failing to be merely empty and waiting, and another case of *ego*-expression.

Mind you, I wouldn't want you to think I consider such God-images useless. Of course I don't. They naturally have a vital and crucial part to play in Religious and other practices of all kinds. But they can be misleading if we forget they are *merely* images—mostly man-made—and see them *as* Divinity. And eventually, God-consciousness is utterly impossible without this simple openness, this absolute attention which is also absolute dependence and a waiting; for God is necessarily beyond any and everything *we* can put before our minds.

And so, the Swami, in line with all true Spiritual Masters—for this advice is not his alone, but runs like a thread of fire through all great mystical traditions—advised me merely to, "Listen!" For in the end, nothing can matter more than hearing Divinity, and no listening could be more absolute. As we have seen, how hard we must attend, and how much of our person and its powers we must marshal in listening, depends entirely upon how hard the word is to hear, and having heard, to understand. And since nothing could be harder, either to hear (since It speaks essentially in stillness; Silence is Its Voice), or to understand (for It *is* the Truth), than That which is Infinite (*anantam*), Eternal (*nitya*) and Boundless (*avyakta*), no attention or centring of one's person in a single aim could be more absolute, nor more demanding. As the great European philosopher, Kierkegaard, remarked, "Purity of heart is the will to one thing." And no heart could be more pure, since none more empty of *ego*, than the one whose will is centred in this great listening. For nothing is more difficult to grasp than Divinity, the Ungraspable: and there can be no compromise or half-heartedness about hearing that which is the result of *merely listening*.

Furthermore, though we can now see clearly what we have to do, nothing could be more difficult than doing it. For this listening demands of us total surrender of all our powers to the task, of all "I"-centred doings, or things done merely for ourselves, and a striving for an attitude of absolute dependence on the good graces of whatever gets presented. For this attitude is that of *listening*, *always*, *absolute vigilance*, even, may I haste to say, and say most strongly, *in acting*. Nothing could be harder than this, for this is achieving a stance of total self-effacement for a Goal Whose Nature we cannot possibly know in advance.

One or two things about this listening are as well to mention, in concluding: for if we do achieve it, we have then achieved nothing less than *mokṣa.* For then we have achieved total release from the bondage of *ego* (*aham-kāra*), by liberation through dependence. For the dependence of absolute listening is upon the disclosures of God; hence, upon God. And when dependence on God is absolute, then, since *ego* is burned away (*dagdha*) it is God who works through you, and not you yourself. So you, then, are God—a *jivan-mukta*.

Which leads straight to the first thing I want to say: that listening in this way is not surrender to inactivity, but only *of ego*-activity. Waiting on God in this way—or, if you wish (and this is how the Jains and Buddhists would speak), *merely listening*—brings deliverances from within which often will demand activity. But now, activity which is undoubtedly properly centred and directed; for now, it is egoless, Godful conduct. It is now the flowing from an empty, open inner-man, filled with God Who acts.

This is what the *Gītā* calls, "*niśkāma-karma*", or action done, not from *ego* or desire, nor for the fruit (*phala*) action may bring, but simply because, as we would put it, speaking from the human side, the God discovered inward directs us to. And this God, and these directives are the product only of listening. Nothing else in the final analysis can give them to us. Other things, like reading books and listening to wise-men, can help; but only listening, only adopting with earnest purpose what some would call, "the meditative mind"—which is a mind that's empty, but waiting—can in the end deliver these to us. For they simply are God Shining out, which It only does when all other encumbering *ego*-things have been removed from Its path. To say the same thing another, more common way—this, and only this, can give us "morality". In the words of Gurumaharaj-Swami Tapovan, "It is ardent faith in one's own Self, God, Religion, Liberation and in the words of the sages that is at the root of all virtues. He who has no faith soon strays away from morality." (Swami Tapovan; *Iśvara Darśan*; qtd, *Tapovan Prasad*, vol. 12, no. 12.)

The beauty of all this, I cannot stress too often, is the simpleness of it: for just by listening, simply listening, this egoless, Godfilled consciousness may be achieved. And with it, a man walks around who is not a man. He looks like a man, he talks like a man; to the undiscerning eye, he even acts like a man. Yet he is not a man, but an empty, egoless shell through which Divinity shines. And most of us even know occasions when glimpses of such Divinity are given us; for most of us know rare moments approaching total selflessness, moments when we don't do things for ourselves, but get possessed by a Force which inspires us to heights of sacrifice, deeds which are egoless and great. The *niśkāma-karma* attitude is one most of us touch, or are touched by, occasionally.

And certainly, even were we not, describing it is simple, so it's simple to *understand*: it's the state of being empty of any *ego*-sense, of being simply Boundless-Consciousness Who acts. But simple though it may be to talk about, and though we may approach it occasionally, it is far from simple to become that being whose *every deed* is always the product of listening. For most of us listen most of the time to ourselves alone: the bitterest of bitter tragedies, when Divinity waits always simply to be listened to, and heard.

5

POLISH THE MIRROR

I. Introduction

Of two bits of advice once given me by the Swami Chinmayananda, one was about holding still and doing nothing, namely—"Listen !".[1] The second bit, it should be no surprise, is the single most general injunction needful about what to *do* —namely, "Polish the mirror". I hasten to add, though, that whilst one of these enjoins holding still and doing nothing, and the other, a certain kind, or kinds, of doing, they are by no means at odds. For the human person is very complex, and nothing whatever forbids him to hold a certain attitude—like, say, that of simply "Listening"—whilst, at the same time, doing, if needs be, everything he does. It is perfectly possible to be always watchful, always vigilant, always listening for that Inner Voice in a way which involves the negation of *ego* (*aham-kāra*), whilst nonetheless attentively *doing* one's doings. And generally one's doings, the Swami was saying, should in all ways conform to the pattern of—*polishing the mirror*.

This advice is not of course a new thing, enjoined for the first time by the Swami. The great

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[1] *Tapovan Prasad*; Vol. XIII, No/s 3 & 4, March-April, 1975.

Bhaktic sage, Chaitanya (1485-1533) opened a hymn with the words:

> "Chant the name of the Lord and His Glory unceasingly.
> That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean."[1]

And Swami Yatishwarananda, speaking of Swami Brahmananda, intimate and devotee or Ramakrishna, remarks in a piece *titled* "Polish The Reflector", that "The pure heart becomes the reflector of the truth. So does the purified, thoughtful mind...If the reflector is clean, the light is reflected in all its splendour, and then we see the light."[2]

This Teaching is not even unique to Hinduism. The great *Sūfī* mystic, Al-Ghazzali, in his *Mishkat Al-Anwar* (*The Niche For Lights*) likened the human soul to a glass, or lamp, through which, when well polished, the Light Divine shines forth. "Once let it be clarified, and it becomes like transparent glass, and no longer keeps out the light, but on the contrary becomes a light-conductor, nay, that which keeps the light from being put out by gusts of wind."[3] And even St. Paul, Christian theologian supreme, describes our present, unregenerate condition as—"through a glass, darkly." All these are ways of saying much the same thing, with almost the same metaphor. And so, to the words themselves: "*Polish the mirror*".

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[1] "Chant the Name of the Lord"; Sri Chaitanya; quoted in *Vedanta For The Western World*, ed. Isherwood.

[2] "Polish the Reflector"; Swami Yatishwarananda; *Vedanta for East & West*; No. 141; pp.16-17.

[3] Al-Ghazzali ; *Niche For Lights*; pp.140-141.

II. Elaboration

Hinduism relates improvement necessarily to self-understanding; and self-understanding it relates to inner-clarity; and inner-clarity it relates to "cleansing the mirror".

I do not intend to justify all these relations, which are advanced as entailment ones, and should the first be challenged—that improvement is, and only is, a product of self-understanding—I would merely comment that what follows remains as suggestions about a pre-condition for self-understanding, whether or not this is thought to be improving. I might add that since this manner of self-understanding is held, *empirically*, to entail an understanding of the ultimate nature of all things (which I will call "truth"), as well as an understanding of how to solve, or dissolve, people's problems, and to satisfy their real needs (and these together I will call "an understanding of what is good"), it is scarcely feasible to deny that, should these claims prove true, achieving such understanding *is*, not merely improving, but *the very pinnacle* of improvement. For this self-understanding is precisely what the Eastern traditions call "Enlightenment"—since it *amounts*, so the *empirical* claim goes, to being filled with the Light of Truth and Goodness.

But since this claim *is* an empirical one, to be tested either by achieving the level in question, or examining the lives of those who do, it is not one about which I can do more at the moment than mention, hoping that it is at least clear that self-understanding is, of itself, and regardless of further consequence, an important and improving goal.

And about this, the one thing needful above all others is, it is said, to—"polish the mirror". To understand, elaborate upon, and hopefully argue for this claim, let me advance the following questions, which I'll then address one by one.

(i) What is the mirror?
(ii) What is it to "polish" it?
(iii) Why should we polish it?
(iv) How do we polish it?
(v) Who is "the polisher"?—a puzzle.

III. The Questions

(i) *What is the mirror?*

Initially, the answer is—"the mind". But that vague phrase won't do. For "the mirror" in question is not merely *manas*, the Sanskrit term usually translated "mind". It is at least the whole inner-man (*antaḥ-karaṇa*), which includes *manas*, but also *buddhi*, *citta*, and *aham-kāra*. And these? Well, without going too deeply, they may be explained thus.

Manas means, the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, or "inner-vehicle", as reasoner, thinker, feeler, emoter, perceiver. Connected to this is *aham-kāra*, or "I-maker", since all these involve an object—thought, feeling, perception, and so on—and a self-conscious subject, or "ego". *Aham-kāra* is accordingly a function of *manas*. *Buddhi* means, the *antaḥ-karaṇa* as judger, intender, willer, director, principle-giver, incliner (in terms of those indwelling inclinations called *vāsanās* or *saṁskāras*), and superintender. To do all this, it must call on a fund of knowledge or memory-traces. This fund is *citta*, which I follow Nikhilananda in translating, "memory".[1] *Citta* can, of course, just mean "consciousness", but that gets us nowhere. For consciousness, without further modification, is as much an aspect of *manas* as anything linked in any special way to *buddhi*. And scriptures like the *Vedantasāra* do mean to be saying something not already said in introducing *citta*, and something especially about *buddhi*. Accordingly, I agree with the Swami Nikhilananda that the best rendering for *citta* would seem to be "memory"—a function of *buddhi* in much the way that *aham-kāra* is a function of *manas*.

So then, both *aham-kāra* and *citta* are really more ways of understanding other things—*manas* and *buddhi*—than aspects of the inner-vehicle, unique in themselves. What is more, *manas* and *buddhi* themselves are misunderstood if thought of as two separate "bits" of a certain whole, somehow glued together. They are merely two different ways of understanding a single thing, called *antaḥ-karaṇa*, in terms of its two differing dimensions of expression.

This, then, is the "mirror", or "reflector" in question—the *antaḥ karaṇa, inner-vehicle* or, to talk in a more Western way, *inner-man*. Why, though, is this, the *inner-man*, so described? Why, that is, is it called a mirror? Simply because there is claimed to be an important sense in which it *does*, perhaps by metaphor, much as a mirror does,—namely, *reflect*. The *antaḥ-karaṇa* is said, in other

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Accordingly, the *antaḥ-karaṇa* or inner-man is held to be a "vehicle" (*karaṇa*) for something else which either is shown forth clearly or not, depending on something to do with this vehicle, in terms of which it obscures this showing, or not. It is *this* doctrine I want to expand upon, but first, an answer to the second of our questions.

(ii) *What is it to "polish" it?*

The answer to this can now be put in very few words: it is to clean the surface so it reflects, or shines forth well. The *antaḥ-karaṇa* gets soiled and defiled with many befogging traces (*kleśas*) which hinder. Polishing it is simply to remove these hindrances. And so, to the third question, the doctrine I've promised to speak about.

(iii) *Why should we polish it?*

I have spoken factually of two aspects of this Teaching: (i) what is meant by "the mirror" or "reflector" or "glass"; and (ii) what is meant by "polishing" it. I have secondly hinted at a certain assumption this image contains, made about the nature of the *antaḥ-karaṇa*. I want now to make this assumption clear and, in a certain mild way, argue for it. In so doing, I hope to answer the really important question, namely, "Even if this image accurately conveys, in its picture-language way, the nature of what I am, inwardly, why, even then, should I, or anyone, actually work to remove the hindrances (*kleśas*) in question? why, that is, actually *polish* the mirror?" And so, the assumption first.

Briefly, to say there is something here inside which hinders, or obscures is to beg a most vital and obvious question: hinders or obscures *what*? And it is the answer to that which will answer what I have called the really important question. For the facts as they are advanced are these.

We look inward and see a number of different aspects to our being which can be promoted, developed, hindered, or neglected. Should we promote them, the consequences will be of two general kinds: (a) destructive, or (b) creative. By "destructive" consequences I mean such as—ignorance (*avidyā*); anger (*krodha*), delusion (*moha*) hatred or general aversion (*dosa*), grouped together by Buddhism as the three major hindrances to Enlightenment; confusion, disquiet, pain, suffering, malaise, discomfort, imbalance, all referred to with the one crucial term "*duḥkha*" (*dukka*, Pali), by both Hinduism and Buddhism; and other unsettling, clarity-befogging, manners of being.

Conversely, by "creative" consequences accruing to promoting certain aspects of one's being I mean those which are, or lead to, added clarity, truth and goodness. Now those aspects of my being which, when developed, do enhance goodness and Light, can be viewed as the *most* true-me, the *most* central-me and for this reason. These aspects, whose nurture and growth is, or leads to, growth in true wisdom, can accordingly be viewed as *the* *most true-me*, in the sense that they are, when taken together, that about my being whose self-understanding *simply shows* all other such understandings to be founded on confusion and ignorance, to be mere masquerades of what I truly am. In part this is another empirical matter—sofar as the claim is that there *is* that manner of achievable self-understanding which *does* do this. But in part it is also a matter of definition—that is, it is true *by definition* that whatever manner of self-understanding creatively evokes clarity and truth about the nature of things—and hence about the nature of my self—more clearly and truly *expresses* that nature, at least about my self, than understandings, or self-understandings, which bring less clarity and truth, and hence more darkness and confusion.

But should one baulk, as most Western thinkers would, at the phrase, "the most true-me", at least it seems true that those aspects of the general complex I, or another, take myself to be when unenlightened, which do, in their stressing or development, enhance clarity and light, are the most *desirable* so to develop. For desirability means nothing if not at least—"whatever promotes, enhances, or *is*, goodness and Light." Naturally, someone can deny this, and make a kind of sense. Punning on the word "desirable", he may say—"I desire badness and dark, untruth and confusion; hence, for me, these are desirable." But this being would merely be wicked; and, *by definition*.

But even should we baulk, as many would, at this Hindu suggestion, it at least cannot be because the phrases "the central-me" or "the true-me", can have no sense, for even in normal parlance there is a certain concept or notion which refers very nearly to what they are said to be about. Let me bring this out in the following way.

As we search into ourselves for an understanding of what we inwardly are—and especially for some possible superintending agent behind our deeds—we recognize there to be a certain "substance", as it were, or "manner of being" which, if allowed to express or show forth, would be near enough to a showing of the basic stuff of one's person. And we can show this, express ourselves *as* it: or we can suppress, stop, or block it. This as-it-were "substance"—quite what term is appropriate is not yet apparent—, which the *ego*-aspect, the *aham-kāra* of me *can* block, or allow free flow, is what I mean by "the central-me", "the true-me". And the point is, I'm saying nothing mysterious here. I'm saying little more than any contemporary Psychologist, Phenomenologist, or Philosopher of Mind would say, excepting perhaps those Behaviourist ones who don't believe there *is* an "inner-me". But with this very rare exception,—which I intend to ignore as *prima facie* implausible, if anything is—all agree that we can, in expressing ourselves, be true to what we inwardly are, or deceive—ourselves or others. The phenomenon of wearing masks or projecting false images is commonplace. We all do it sometimes: and some of us, sadly, mostly.

And that in large measure is all I presently mean—that we do understand there to be a certain inner-me to which "keeping faith" or "being true to" is the nature of honesty. We do, in other words, understand these to be in inner manner of being, *and* an *ego* empowered to allow or suppress its expression. Than this I am only saying one further thing in speaking of the as-it-were "substance" I am most centrally: that this inner-me has a certain nature, rather than a certain other kind of nature it is sometimes thought to have; and this I can illustrate by addressing the following objection.

Forgetting what I've said about destructive and creative aspects of the general complex I may, when unenlightened, take myself to be, someone may rejoinder to the hinted suggestion that blocking the inner-me is undesirable, in words like these:

> "Surely sometimes, letting what I truly am within speak-out is not good, so that often, stoppage by the *ego*—which need not here be dishonesty, but a frank admission of suppression (*e.g.*, "I feel aggressive, but I control it")—would be right and proper."

This is true. Sometimes stopping mere anger or drives from within is good. Sometimes I do find myself inclined or driven to behave in fundamentally destructive ways; to be aggressive, belligerant, spiteful, hurtful, even suicidal or murderous. And then, it is clearly important to suppress. And certainly, these are aspects of what we are, inwardly. But they are not the aspects I have spoken of as "creative", hence not the aspects which characterize "the central-me". And this is the *little* more I'm saying than the above commonplace peoples: not just that there *is* an inner-me I can hide or not, and whose expression is being honest about what I truly am, but also that there is a self central to this "inner" one which even more truly conveys what I am. And this, though it may differ from much Western thought, differs not in kind but in extent. It adds an extra bit to at least many other Western claims, an extra which is at least clearly sensible, and at least possibly true.

Again it is to be remembered that this claim about the as-it-were "substance" within is an empirical one, the claim being that, when I expressly develop those aspects of the general complex I now—though perhaps in ignorance—call "me" which do clarify and enlighten, it is precisely *this* as-it-were "substance" I discover myself centrally enlightened about. As I have argued, if there are such aspects, and they can be developed—as surely there are, and can—it follows they must be, or be the surrogates of, what I truly am. For if there is a manner of self-understanding which enlightens, as distinct from other manners which do not, this must be the manner which reflects the true-me. And since, if we accept that people do have a certain inner-nature, there must be *some* manner of self-understanding which enlightens *more* than others, there must be some manner which *does* so reflect the true-me, whether or not we agree with the Hindu or Buddhist claims about its characteristics. And whether we *do* so agree with the latter will depend upon whether we pursue the appropriate activities, and *prove* them to be true. Accordingly, the above exceptional position arise, it follows there is a *centrally* inner-me to be discovered, to be expressed, to be suppressed or to be betrayed. And so we can sum-up the position sofar as follows. First, there is the true inward-me, struggling to out. Secondly, things--inward and outward—stop the clean, clear shining forth of the true inward-me. Thirdly, this is undesirable, if I want my self-expression to be honestly of what I, *centrally*, am. And if I do so "want", that answers our present question—*why* polish the mirror? Because this, and this alone, will lead to what is *desirable* for me.

And so, to expand this answer a little: why polish, where this means rubbing-off hindrance to clear reflection of shining forth? Because what is being hindered is the true-me, the central-me, the me whose self-expression is clarity, truth and goodness: the me, in other words, for which Hinduism uses the term, "*Ātman*". That is why. And nothing could matter more, if the Sages are to be believed—and who, if not they—for what we then let shine out is no mere individual, expressed, but the very Cosmic Ultimate Itself. This we will know, and only know, when we do the deed in question. Until then, one thing we can say is this: that since the object is full truth and goodness in the senses outlined, and hence perfection in wisdom, this "object" can only be That wherein such perfection lies: which could only be this Ultimate. The question, of course, remains whether such an achievement—that is, Enlightenment—is possible, and, I repeat, this we will know, and only know, when we do the "polishing" in question. Meanwhile, since no life-aim could matter more, this "polishing" must be uppermost among things we do, in the hope of achieving at least as much Enlightenment as possible. Life's aim must, or rather, should be to live as nearly as possible to full truth and goodness. For only then is it worthy of praise.

(iv) *How do we polish it?*

We come to our fourth question—How do we polish the mirror? Which is, of course, now the question—How do we rub these hindrances away? But to answer this, we must answer a prior question, namely—*What* hinders the clear, unsullied shining-forth of the central-me? To which the most general response must be, either (i) things from outside, coming in to fog, or (ii) things already inside, fogging and blocking from there. And, to take these in order.

The former will be the perception-product of sense-experience; the latter, *antaḥ-karaṇa*-assertion in one or both of two ways. Either by (ii)(a) the *aham-kāra*, or *ego*, pretending to be the central-me, or *Ātman per se*. Or by (ii)(b) the four-aspected *antah-karana* acting as a filter through which only a modicum of *Ātman*-expression seeps. Sometimes it might seem that only part of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* blocks and hinders, for instance, *manas* accompanied by *aham-kāra*. But this is deceptive, for *manas* never moves without *buddhi* (in conjunction with *citta*) *inclining* it to do so. It is *buddhi*, not *manas* which houses those stored-up inclinations (*vāsanās*) which result from remembered responses to past situations and deeds (*karma*). Accordingly, when *Ātman* is blocked, the entire *antaḥ-karaṇa* is to blame. How, then, to overcome hindrances (i) and (ii)? Again, each in turn.

Firstly, how do we polish our person clean of sense-experience soiling or defilement? There are two ways. Most simply, by stopping all experience of sense, by doing whatever is within one's power to stop experiencing. This, indeed, is what *Patañjali's aśtaṅga* or "eight-limbed" *yoga* system calls "*pratyāhāra*"—the closing down of the sense-organs till they are no longer receptive to those stimuli which give rise to perception, and hence to those presentations which defile the inner-vehicle, either by being mistaken for a picture of what one really is, or by befogging the mirror so that what one *really* is shines forth only dimly, or with distortion. In a beautiful image, the *Bhagavadgītā* likens this operation to that of the tortoise (*kūrma*) withdrawing its limbs into its hard, inviolable carapace.[1]

One way, then, of stopping defilement by "sense" is simply to stop "sense"-things coming in. But another, less extreme, though accordingly more complex way is, not to stop them altogether, but to be constantly watchful about them, wakefully aware of sense-experience *as* such, and no more. In this way, by constanṭ "mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*), as Buddhism calls it, we can stop undue interference or trickery. We can thereby avoid mistaking what comes in for what shines out from inside. In this way, whilst they still come, whilst perceptions still are bad, they effect our self-understanding not at all, being no longer confused with, or mistaken for, a true picture of what one is. They are there, but "seen" as one thing: I, the central-me, am here, "seen" as another. So the danger there always is otherwise—of believing we are taking guidance from what we really are, inside, when in fact we are being duped by something which has come in from outside—this danger is no longer so real.

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[1] *Bhagavadgītā* ; Ch.2, 58.

Secondly, how do we polish our mirror clean of befogging from what is already inside, due either to *aham-kāra* masquerading as the central-me, or to my true shining-forth being blocked in some other way? Each again in turn. The *ego*-masquerade is again put away by mindfulness, where this now means, vigilance by "the Higher-Mind" (which stands above the *ego*, whether far enough to be the central-me or not), over "Lower–Mind" behaviour, that is, *ego*-asserting *manas* behaviour. A watchfulness *over* this, so awareness of it as *other than* the most ultimate, central-me, shining out. This is not difficult, and happens all the time. Once I was duped by this masquerade; now I am not. The "vigilance"-phenomenon I am talking of is quite as simple as that. Don't look for complexities There are none. This simply depicts a pretty ordinary human growth-happening, a certain quite unexceptional phase in the general struggle for self-discovery. We start out by *thinking* we are this, the *manas:aham-kāra* complex. And then we find we are something else, this higher consciousness which superintends and watches *manas:aham-kāra.* That's all.

And how do we, on the other hand, stop *antah-karaṇa blocking* my true shining-forth? In part, through vigilance as above, since this at least involves awareness of, and control over, *ego*- operation. But only in part, for so long as there is *ego*-expression, a full flow of the central-me remains *in fact* hindered. The problem is this. *Ahạṃ-kāra*

("I-maker) is the "I"-sense accompanying all deeds of the unenlightened. And "I"-sense, as that of my person as an individual among others, is fearfully tenacious. It is incredibly difficult to have this "sense", and not be duped by it. Not perhaps entirely impossible, logically, but virtually so for the unenlightened. And this is why, the only *assuredly* effective way of not being so duped when still a less than-Enlightened Wayfarer, is to be rid of this "sense"—that is, to be rid of *ego*. And perhaps I should now clarify a relation left obscure earlier, in order that this even vague logical possibility should be clearer—the relation between *manas*-happenings—thinking, reasoning, feeling, emoting, perceiving—and having "I"-sense.

Earlier I noted that the latter—*aham-kāra*—was "a function" of the former, namely, *manas* conceiving itself as an individual-subject. This may appear to suggest that you cannot have one without the other, which is false. There is no reason whatever why there could not be *manas*-states, like "thinking" and so, on, without *manas* also conceiving itself as an individual-subject. For these are two separate things, either of which could occur without the other. Clearly, *in fact*, *manas*-happenings are almost invariably accompanied by "I"-sense. But this link is contingent, and, though mostly, it doesn't *always* hold. We are sometimes "absent-minded", or so engrossed in some *manas*-process, that there is in fact *no* "I"-sense. After all, "I"-sense is itself a "content" of *manas*, so as *contingently* present as any other. Moreover, its *ontological* status is the same as any other—that of a fleeting mind-state. Accordingly, it can in no sense be said to be the *origin* of these states, and whilst this doesn't, in one move, prove there is no substance or thing we might call "*manas*", existing independently of these states, it does show that *aham-kāra* is no such "substance", being nothing other than one of the states themselves. Indeed, as is well known, the normal Buddhist understanding of the mature of "mind" is of a constant flux and flow of such states, in absence of any subject having them. I'll say more about this in dealing with Question (v). For now, just this.

One clear way of stopping *antaḥ-karaṇa* filtering, and so blocking at least much of the central-me expression, is to stop its activity altogether. Because we *begin* with the belief that we are *antaḥ-karaṇa*, and hence other than *Ātman*, we begin with a consciousness unable to *assess* the status of *antaḥ-karaṇa*, assuming it is *not* what we ultimately are. So long as we believe we *are* it, we can't stand outside to clearly *see* it. Hence, to know whether we *actually are antaḥ-karaṇa*, or something more deep and central, we must try to get detached from it. And one sure way of getting detached from anything defined by its operation is to stop that operation altogether, for in this way we assuredly stop our *involvement in* that operation.

This, then, is what we must try, to stop *antaḥ-karaṇa's* blocking—if it can be stopped. If we succeed, not only would "I"-sense vanish, but all sense of there being some discernible operation in terms of which I might be defined. And *if* I succeed, *then* I might, *afterwards*, return to a level of expressed consciousness states, without, however, there being any longer any "sense" of attachment to them, still less of these states *being* the person I am, that is, the central-me. This manner-of-being—expressed consciousness-states, with no *ego*—is, of course, the manner enjoyed by the true *jivan-mukta*, by the *arahant*, and by the true *buddha*.

And of course, this matter of going beyond, behind, or, if you wish, destroying *antaḥ-karaṇa*, and accordingly achieving a certain manner of "emptiness" (about which I will say more in a moment), is precisely the entire thrust of *dhyāna*, as meditation. For *dhyāna* is firstly a matter of shutting-off all avenues inwards, so no soiling happens from outside; then of shutting-down all activity from within, so that no befogging or blocking-obstacle can arise there either: in which case, the true, inward, central-me—the *Ātman*—will simply flow forth. All is clear, silent, uncluttered, totally absent of extraneous influence; so that what there inwardly is must just express. And, because clarity then abounds, so too a knowledge of truth and goodness. To this, the Sages of every age bear eloquent witness.[1]

Meditation, then, is the business of "mind"-stopping and inward-emptying: quite as, in its own way, I might add, is Spiritual Listening. For this latter, as I have noted, is the stance of simply holding oneself entirely open and ready for whatever the appropriate channels have to offer. As such, it is not quite so "mind"-stopping as *dhyāna*, since at least there is the constant *sense* of readiness. And any "sense" can in some way be said to be a "mind" one. But all the same, pure Spiritual Listening (roughly, *śravana)* is so highly rarified a level of development, and so clearly saintly a characteristic, that it's more than worthy of note in this place. With *dhyāna*, it's a method, or *marga*, a *yoga* whose object simply is being rid of inward mind-defilement, that the central self, the Absolute within, may just shine out. Again, the Swami's word enfleshed. For this again, this very vital life-improving injunction, we have arrived at simply by following through the natural logic of the phrase: "*Polish the mirror*".

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[1] The *argument* here is that my every expression then *simply is* of truth and goodness. And should a philosopher still wish to ask "why?", the answer is obvious: that what we have been speaking about *just is* development of that about me which does *in fact* lead to heightened truth and goodness, to clarity and light. And where this is developed to its full, in situations such that it *alone* expresses, clearly my every expression *must* be simply of truth and goodness."

(v) *Who is "the polisher"*?

Our final question, then, is the puzzle: who or what *does* the polishing? And puzzle though it may appear at first blush, the answer is now quite simple. And this is because it is now quite clear there is not one, but several answers. Thence the seeming puzzle. We set out in quest for one solution, when there are in fact several, depending upon *which* hindrance we are striving to be rid of. So let us take them in turn, remembering always that this "being rid of" is the "polishing" in question.

Firstly, if it is sense-experience we are striving to stop, to block hindrance from outside, "the polisher" is clearly the *antaḥ-karaṇa* as "will". And here, I exert will, or will is exerted, in two ways—first, by doing as many *physical* things as possible to stop experiencing (e.g., sitting still in a dark, quiet place, with eyes closed); then, second, by deliberately centring attention ever more inwards, so away from the pestering influence of sense-things.

Secondly, if it is "vigilance" we are using to try to inhibit the *effect* of sense-experience, without necessarily stopping it altogether, "the polisher" is the inner-vehicle as a watchful detached witness. But though it is this, there is no suggestion it is more. No suggestion, in other words, that "the polisher" here should be other than the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, nor, indeed, that it should be wholly empty of *ego*. I, replete with "I"-sense, can observe myself observing; another intriguing complexity to add to our catalogue of facts about the human condition and its dimensions. And this, we should note for clarity, is obviously different from the more advanced, since more purely centre-self, behaviour of expressing consciousness-states in absence of "I"-sense.

Thirdly, if the hindrance is mind-duping from within, so that the overcoming-method is mindfulness by the Higher-Mind, "the polisher" is closer still to the central-self, being *trans-aham-kāra witness and superintendent*. And then "the polisher" may well merely be *buddhi*. There is, in other words, no clear sanction to conclude it to be the true central-me, though there is now clearly no semblance of *ego*.

And finally, if overcoming is the operation of going beyond, behind or abolishing *manas*, indeed, *antaḥ-karaṇa* altogether, "the polisher" then must refer to the *trans-antaḥ karaṇa* "*Willer*". This there must be for this "going beyond" to occur. And since it does—in *dhyāna* and, to a lesser extent, Spiritual Listening—there clearly is such a "Willer".

But this last suggestion is difficult, because, to the Western mind at least, "a will" entails some conscious intention by some self-conscious agent. And clearly this cannot be an accurate picture of what does the polishing here. For here, I am talking of something intrinsically difficult to talk about : the *dhyāna*-fact of progressively ridding the *buddhi* : *manas* of its content. And when *buddhi* : *manas* is rid of its content, nothing remains beneath. Let me explain.

Firstly, this, the fact of *buddhi* : *manas* lacking in content, has been attested to by those who have reached the very final, most rarified reaches of *dhyāna*, namely, *nirvikalpa samādhi* in Hindu terms, or *vipassana nirvāṇa*, sometimes refered to as *vinnanassa nirodha* ("stopping of consciousness"), in Buddhist ones. And here, it is crucially important that the fact in question be accurately depicted. The point is this : to all who have been there and tasted this manner of being, even in the slightest, the depictions given do in fact always agree in this—that here is a "manner", not only of no mind-content, but also of nothing describable, a "being-empty" which is nonetheless not an emptiness of being. When what is contained goes, there *proves to be* nothing containing, that is, *nothing*. The manner of being here is, if you wish, a something which is nothing describable. And if "nothing describable", nothing describable as "mind", or as "*buddhi* : *manas*".

For this reason, it is called "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*), or "extinction" (*nirvāṇa*), or "release" (*mokṣa*)—clearly not descriptions, but referring terms which *indicate* the presence of some reality through negation. That this "emptiness" is not the void of annihilation is clear from the fact that the being who has achieved this, acts in an enlightened, wise way, from the very centre of it. He acts, in Buddhist terms, with "insight" (*pañña*, Pali). In other words, it is not that he is nothing. It is just that he is nothing he was, or believed he could be, before. What he is now is something he can't find words for—that's all. But of course, a huge "all". Though for us, it means most centrally that the "*trans*"-*inner-vehicle* "*Willer*", the ultimate, highest "polisher" of all, is borne witness to by the whole weight of utterance from those very people we are obliged to take *more* seriously than others, namely, Enlightened Saints. These are the very ones who urge us to tread as they have, for in this way, they teach, we can give Spiritual substance ourselves to this otherwise mere abstract possibility.

No evidence could possibly carry more weight, if it must be by inference, or word of others, Nor could any example, or injunction be more urgent. Yet sadly, by and large in these *Kali-Yuga* days, we still ignore precisely this. To our peril.

6

HINDUISM AND POLYTHEISM

I. Normally in English the term *devās* is rendered by "gods", a fact which has led to certain errors about the Hindu tradition by those not of it. For instance, often this tradition is branded "polytheistic"; which sometimes is harmless enough, even helpful, if used merely to *describe* the fact that Hindus do recognize, even venerate, a multitude of *devās*.[1] But sometimes branding it "polytheistic" is meant to suggest that wise Hindus believe there to be a host of "gods", all equivalent to the single Semitic one. And this would be false even of Hindus who are other than wise in any special way. The Hindu equivalent, so far as there is one, to *Christianity's* "God, the Father, Supreme Being or Person", is *Brahman*, manifest as *Īśvara*, and sometimes called "*puruṣottama*" which literally means "Supreme Person",[2] and of which there is only one.

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[1] One of the most outstanding works ever written about Hinduism's Celestial and chthonic Dwellers (*devās*, *āsuras* etc) is Alain Danièleu's work, quite pointedly called *Hinḍu Polytheism*.

[2] See *Bhagavadgītā* X: 15, where the word *Puruṣottama* is used as a name for *Kṛṣṇa*, Who is of course the Ultimate, incarnate; and XV: 15-18, where the word is used to talk about *Brahman*, explicitly.

Briefly, *Īśvara* is *Brahman* expressing itself, such that it appears as the Supreme Being, worthy of all worship (*yajñā*, lit., "sacrifice" or "making sacred") by those whose level of being needs this for self-development and realization. *Bhakti-yoga*, or "the integrating-way of devotion", is the mode for which *Īśvara* is especially relevant. Both *Īśa* and *Katha Upaniṣads*, and some chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā*,[1] are *Bhakti*-pieces, stressing devotion to *Brahman*, manifest as the Supreme Person.

But it is not the status of *Īśvara* or *Puruṣottama* as more accurate parallels for the semitic "God"—or *Allah* – I wish here to look into, but that of *devās*. Now, the fact that Hinduism recognizes several *devās* no more renders it proper to brand this tradition "poly-theistic" than the fact that Christianity, in some of its expressions, grants a status to certain specific "angels", does the same for it. In fact it may well an occasion often be helpful to use the translation "angels" for *devās*, as much in their status and nature is common to both in these two traditions.[2]

Accordingly, then, the doctrine of *devās* differs much from that of *Īśvara*, and relates only vaguely to the Semitic notion of "God" as the Single

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[1] R.C. Zaehner is wrong to consider the *Bhagavadgītā* a predominantly *Bhaktic* work, as he does in his otherwise excellent Oxford University Press translation. The *Gītā*, which is *Yoga-Śastra*, is nonetheless too wise to allow any single Yoga to dominate. Though if any did, it would be *Karma-Yoga*, and not *Bhakti*. Despite this, Zaehner's translation is one of the best available to earnest readers ignorant of Sanskrit.

[2] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's excellent article, "Angel and Titan: an Essay in Vedic Ontology", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 55, employs just this translation.

Supreme Person. It is in fact yet another example of the genius Hinduism has for accommodating all approaches to *Brahma-vidyā*, reflecting all levels of understanding and temperament. The teaching could be brought out in this way. Should even the level of *Īśvara*, as Supreme Person, prove too abstract and not sufficiently concrete, not sufficiently related to someone's present, limited grasp of the Divine Immensity, then, says, Hinduism, let us proliferate further, cosmologically, and speak of each "*aspect*", power or function of *Brahman*, or of *Īśvara*, as Divine. And let us personify each aspect, power or function by giving it a name--even a shape or form—through which the Ultimate can be venerated by means of invocation. For invoking the names of any of the "aspects" of *Brahman* is in effect the same as invoking *Brahman* (as *Īśvara*). Each of these names is the name of a certain *deva*, who is not considered equivalent to *Īśvara*, much less to *Brahman*.

And if it is now asked whether *devas* "exist", the answer is that they do, if by this you mean, do they function as independent realities at a certain level of understanding. Certainly, they are not the *inventions* of those whose level of self-understanding relies upon seeing them as real for its approach to *Brahma-vidya*. To such a man, they are presented, and are real. Indeed, they are possibly more real to him than anything. To him, in other words, the Divine is present in several forms, fulfilling several functions, all of which are related, though none identical. How they are related is not a question he would find presently convenient, or possible, to answer. *Were* he asking these questions, he would already be beyond his present level.

To an enlightened man, on the other hand, to one possessed of *Brahma-vidyā per se*, *devās* do not "exist". But then, realising his identity with *Brahman*, such a being does not consider himself to "exist" either. "Existence", as that level where manifest things are real, has no ultimacy for him. "Reality", in other words, for such a being, *means* "*Brahman*": and *Brahman* is the Ultimate Principle of all things, so doesn't "exist" as one of them.

II. With this in mind, let me illustrate what I've said, and the doctrine of *devās* generally, with the following words from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1:4:10.

> 'This (*idam*, a reference to one's person, indeed, anything *in esse*) was most truly *Brahman* in origin (*agre*, referring to an ontological or principial origin, and not necessarily to anything temporal, as most translations suggest).
>
> It (*tad*; refers to *idam*) only knew *Āṭman* (its *esse*, or Self), as 'I am *Brahman*'. Accordingly, it became All (*sarvam*; refers to the Cosmos). And whomsoever among the gods (*devās*) awakened (or, "became enlightened") to It, he simply became It; likewise *ṛṣis*, and in similar fashion, men (*manus*)...
>
> Even now, whomsoever knows this (*idam*) thusly[1]—'I am *Brahman*'—he *becomes* this All. Not even *devās* are able to cause him not to

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[1] "Thusly" is perhaps an ugly construction; yet I have found it the only way to convey the original Sanskrit without adding words to make it English.

> become. For he becomes their (*devās*') *Ātman* also. Accordingly, whoever another *deva* venerates—as 'I am one: he (the *deva*) another'—he does not know (that *Ātman*, his *esse*, is *Brahman*)."

There is much we might say about these words, but talking only about *devās*, we note, firstly, that three kinds of being are here spoken of as independent, yet equally real—*devās*, *ṛṣis*, and *manus* (men). And the point to be made is, if the latter two are considered real, and not merely reflections of something else, the first—*devās*—must also be. For *devās*, these and other words make clear,[1] are nothing if not a manifestation *essentially* closer to the Ultimate than men. Indeed, the literal meaning of *deva* is "Shining One"; that is, "more-Light-Filled One"; that is, "more-Enlightened-One". As we might, expect, this is also the literal meaning of the

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[3] It is sometimes said that *devās* cannot attain *Brahma-vidyā*, but this is false. There is no *śruti* to support it, and several *śrutis* which clearly deny it—e.g., *Bṛhad* 1:4:10, *Chānd*. IV: 15:5, *Chānd*. VIII:7-12, *Kausītaki Upaniṣad* 1:1-3. Indeed, the tradition talks of two *yānas* or "ways" *-deva—yāna*, or "the way of the *devās*", and *pitṛ-yāna*, or "the way of the *pitṛs*" (lit., "fathers", "ancestors"). And, observes Radhakrishnan, "those who travel by the former (*deva-yāna*) do not return to a new life on earth but attain liberation by gaining a true knowledge of *Brahman*. "*(The Principle Upaniṣads*; p. 754). This of course merely reflects such *śrutis* as *Bṛhad*. VI:2:2-16, *Chānd*. V:3:2, V:10:2, *Muṇḍaka* III:1:6, and *B/gītā* VIII:23-28. Moreover, it is metaphysically incoherent to suggest that there should be a level of manifestation *in principle* debarred from developing further. I wonder has this suggestion not arisen as an hubristic stress by humans (*manus*) of their own level of manifestation.

other word occasionally, though rarely,[1] used to describe these Celestial Beings, namely—"*śura*". And so, to take up this point.

What might be called the Central Teaching of Hinduism says that *Ātma-vidyā* is *Brahma-vidyā*, that knowing who I am is knowing I am Divinity. And this will be true of all beings whose innermost essence is personal, and hence, not of ordinary men (*manus*) only, but also of *ṛṣis*, as enlightened men, and of *devās*, who, though neither men nor *ṛṣis*, are, when seen as real, certainly centres of individual consciousness. Hindu Cosmology, a study which is not yet that of *Brahma-vidyā in esse*, speaks of more modes of manifest realness than normal in the West; and one mode is that of *devās*, as centres of individual, personal consciousness, performing certain supra-human or Divine functions.

For clarity, it might help to note that the origin of *devās* is explained in two ways. Firstly, and most importantly, there are those whom Swami Bhavyananda happily calls, "individualized spiritual principles".[2] Should we care to ask *how* they

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[1] See *Bhagavadgītā* X:2, where the two words occur as synonyms in the same *śloka*.

"na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ
prabhavaṃ na mahaṣayah
abam ādir hi devānāṃ
maharṣīṇāṁ ca sarvasaḥ."
"Not my origin know the host of gods (*sura*),
nor the Great Rsis,
for I am the source of the gods (*deva*),
and the Great Rsis, all."

[2] "The Hindu Gods And Their Symbolism". Swami Bhavyananda, *Vedanta For East & West*, No. 139, Sept.-Oct., 1974; p. 3.

"come to be", on the assumption of course that they are "real", the answer is simple: they are manifest emanations, or projections, of some aspects of the "substance", as it were, of the Ultimate, or *Brahman*, as Creator—of, that is, *Prajāpati*, as he is normally called here.[1] Secondly, there dwell in the *deva-loka* beings whose *tapas* or *karma-yoga* as *manus* or *ṛṣis* in a prior life amassed such merit (*puṇya*) that, upon physical death, they were not re-incarnated, but re-manifested as *devās*.[2]

Of the two, the former are said to have greater sanctity. Indeed, as *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4: 3: 33 remarks, the *ānanda* or Supernal Bliss of the former, called "*ājanā-devās*", or "*devās* by birth", is a hundred times greater than that of the latter, the *karmaña-devās*, or those who have *achieved deva*-hood through sanctifying action. And whilst the figure "one hundred" is mere poetry and not literally meant, the message is clear—that *ājāna-devās* are more "Bliss"-filled, because more "Light"—filled, because more "*Brahma-vidyā*"–filled[3] even than *karmaña-devās*, or humans who have achieved *deva-loka* through righteous deeds.

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[1] See, for instance, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* V:2:1-3, V:5:1, VIII: sect/s 7, onwards; *Chāndogya* 1:2:1.

[2] See, for instance, *Bṛhad*. 4:3:33. Compare *Bhagavadgītā* VIII:23-27, & IX:20-21.

[3] It is sometimes said that *devās* cannot attain *Brahma-vidya*, but this is false. There is no *śruti* to support it, and several *śrutis* which clearly deny it—e.g., *Bṛhad* 1:4:10, *Chānd.* IV: 15:5, *Chānd.* VIII:7-12, *Kausītaki Upaniṣad* 1:1-3. Indeed, the tradition talks of two *yānas* or "ways"—*deva-yāna*, or "the way of the *devās*", and *pitṛ-yāna*, or "the way of the *pitṛs*" (lit., "fathers", "ancestors"). And, observes Radhakrishnan, "those who travel by the former (*deva-yāna*) do

Devās differ in one other important way from humans and *ṛṣis*—they are not necessarily, and never essentially, embodied.[1] And whilst there is a simple sense in which *karmaña-devās* may be

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not return to a new life on earth but attain liberation by gaining a true knowledge of *Brahman.* "*(The Principal Upani-ṣads*; p. 754). This of course merely reflects such *śrutis* as *Bṛhad.* VI:2:2-16, *Chānd.* V:3:2, V:10:2, *Muṇḍaka* III:1:6, and *B/gītā* VIII:23-28. Moreover, it is metaphysically incoherent to suggest that there should be a level of manifestation *in principle* debarred from developing further. I wonder has this suggestion not arisen as an hubristic stress by humans (*manus*) of their own level of manifestation.

[1] Hindu Orthodoxy allows *devās* occasionally to descend to the world of men and *take on* a body, as *āvatāras*, or Divine Incarnations. But when they do, they are adopting something which is foreign to their intrinsic nature. On the other hand, it is not uncommon to find in the literature quite fabulous elaboration upon the nature of the *deva-loka*, occasionally even subdividing it (which should be no surprise) to accommodate lesser *devās*, thought to have bodies of a *subtle* nature, and higher ones, thought to have none. This suggestion, more common among the Jains and Buddhists than in Hindu literature, where it occurs occasionally only as a serious *metaphysical* suggestion, is altogether orthodox. For the *devās*, being closer to Enlightenment, and a total grasp of *Brahma-vidyā*, than mundane creatures, are only *closer*, and hence not there altogether. Accordingly, they are still on the Way, so must be of a nature consistent with this. And for reasons it is not appropriate to enter here, the modicum "nature" is at least certain aspects of the *linga-śarira*, at least, that is, a certain rudimentary subtle-body.

Occasionally, however, this orthodoxy crumbles into the heterodox blunder of affording *devās* a *gross* or physical body. It is obviously appropriate only to speak of this in the world of gross manifestation, or that of *manus*, of men; hence, not in the *deva-loka*. And whilst this considered *dis*-embodied, clearly *ājāna-devās* cannot be, since they are manifest from the start with *no* physical body. Now, to Hinduism, embodiment is, ontologically and hence cosmologically, a later, less perfect level of manifestation than others. For this reason, *devās* are *naturally* more perfect and less removed from the Ultimate Principle they bespeak than men, who are embodied by nature. For being embodied by nature hinders self-understanding, since it places more, obstacles in its path than otherwise would be there. Indeed, embodiment presents a quite indefinite range of fresh temptations to attachment (*sangam*) which, if embraced, lead to Lower Realms and not to Upper ones. And so, lacking a body, *devās* are *naturally* closer to their Divine Source; hence are deemed "higher", so, like *Īśvara*, appropriate objects of appeal and worship.

Moreover, *ājāna-devās* are naturally more perfect in another sense also. Being "born" with no body, they cannot be subject in any way to its taint. And so they cannot be carrying within them those *karmic* traces called "*vāsanās*" which, even in the case of *karmaña-devās*, influence individuals away from Enlightenment in its wholeness. Roughly, these are dispositions giving rise to wrong, or non-

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blunder is again more common among Jains and Buddhists, it isn't entirely absent from Hindu thought. Even the great Śankara seems to me guilty of it, in his anxiety to ensure the possibility of *mokṣa* open for *devās*. See his *bhaśya* on *Brahma-Sūtra*, 26.

For a succinct summary of various views about this, see H. Glassenap, *Immortality and Salvation in Indian Religions*, Sunil Gupta, India, 1968, pp. 40 49.

creative desires. And this is of course why *karmaña devās* are less "Light"-filled. There simply is more darkness in them: and hence, their "Bliss" is diminished.

Sketchily, then, this is the status of the many deities so widely venerated throughout India. And, as we can now see, they are not in any simple way to be equated with *Brahman*, the Ultimate. Nor would any wise Hindu take them to be, except in the sense that he might take them to be *symbols for Brahman*. And even this position is not without its perils, as *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1:4:7 is swift to point out. The fact is, each *deva*,—and especially each *ajāna-deva*—is worshipped precisely because he or she does symbolize some function or functions of the Ultimate, functions which, however, may get focused upon *as if they were* the Ultimate. And in Hindu terms, this is the danger of "theism". For, as this scripture pointedly remarks, "These (the *deva*-symbols) are but It's (*Brahman's*) names, due to function (*karmanāmāni*)."

III. I had best add that I am not here interested in any suggested *historical* development of the doctrine of the *devās*, but only with the wisdom prompting its introduction into the central metaphysic of Hinduism at its best. And since there can be no reason to believe that Hinduism at its best is something which came later rather than earlier, there can be none to accept that what I am here speaking of has developed, in any sense, historically. Certainly, the way this aspect of the central metaphysic has been expressed will have altered with historical contingencies, and it is likely that *the names* given to the various Divine functions expressed in this Teaching will alter. But the essence of the Teaching itself can in no way alter, so that any real addition one might discover written into *smṛti* literature must be to the detriment, and not otherwise. *Sanātana dharma per se* cannot evolve without ceasing to be "*sanātana*", though it may of course alter in its mode of expression. But I have developed this more fully elsewhere.[1]

Now, much remains to be said about the *manners* in which the Teaching of "*devās* as *brahman*'s names, due to function (*karmanāmāni*)" has found expression. There is, for instance, the subsidiary doctrine of the *devatās*, in which a specific *deva* is chosen as subject of special veneration. When an individual so chooses, this "object" is then called his *iṣṭa* ("wished-for" or "chosen") -*devatā*; and when, say, a village or community does so, then called its *grāma* (*village*)-*devatā*.

But perhaps a more important way to illustrate this Teaching is by reference to three *devās*, two of which are among the most widely venerated in India today, related in a way which has given them the title, the "*trimurti*", or "three-forms". Indeed, most other *devās*—or *ājāna-devās* at least—can be traced in some way to this Three, either through myth as "earlier names for" or "sons, daughters, &c of",[2] or through metaphysic as, for instance, "*śakti*" or power. Most female *devās* venerated in modern India are in some sense the *śakti*-aspect of one or more of the *trimurti*. "In some sense", for this *śakti*-aspect, thought of as a Female Companion or Counterpart, is often split-off and worshipped in Her own right; and there is certainly no suggestion that—split-off as independent or not—this "aspect" is *less* important than any other.

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[1] See, "Śruti & Philosophy", *Nūmen*, Vol. XIX.

[2] For instance, *Gaṇeśa* and *Subramaṇya* (or, *Skanda*) are said to be the sons of *Śiva*.

It should, then, be clear that the Three I have in mind function very centrally in today's form of this Teaching; and if so, that their understanding will greatly enhance understanding of the *metaphysical* Teaching at issue here. Indeed, that the *trimurti* has the central place it does further underlines the fact that the Teaching of *devās* as *Brahman's* "names, due to function" belongs to *sanātana dharma*; for, as I will show in a moment, the three-forms these represent are the three most basic possible. In which case, there is no sense in which they could ever have been other than they are, or ever become other, and whilst the nature of these Three may have been recognized or understood by men only at a later date, this possibility can be largely discounted, if we recall that Enlightenment is not the monopoly of *any* period in history—and certainly not a later one. In other words, since the doctrine of the *trimurti* does embody Teaching about *Prajāpati* in His three most basic aspects, those aspects from which all other aspects, and hence manifest *devās*, emanate, we can have no sanction to believe other than that sages in the very beginning taught it in some form or other. And historical evidence can have bearing only on the manner or form in which this Teaching was advanced in any particular era. After all, it should be remembered—as mostly it is not—that even the earliest *Vedic* manuscripts we have can scarcely be held to be a *total* repository of the Teaching abroad at the time. It is even highly likely that the most important Teaching was *never* written down. Such is the way with Religious traditions. And since we have no good reason to doubt that the very earliest of sages were possessed of *sanātana dharma*, and every reason to believe that, *were* they sage, they *must* have been so possessed, we have no good reason to conclude—as many, perhaps most scholars do—that these Teachings were not known to them. Let me now illustrate the *deva*-teaching at issue by describing the *trimurti*, and its cosmological basicness, in small detail.

IV. The Three I am speaking of are those we now give the names—*Śiva*, *Brahmā*, and *Viṣṇu*. They are, says *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, one of the earliest *śrutis* to speak of the Three as such, "nothing but the original offspring (or "chief forms"; *argyās tanavah*) of *Brahman*, the Supreme, the Immortal, the Bodiless."[1] It is interesting to note that this *Upaniṣad* uses the earlier name *Rudra* for the Divine aspect or function now normally conveyed by the name *Śiva*. Indeed, *Śiva*, used to name this aspect, and not (as often in the *Vedas*) as an adjective meaning "auspicious", occurs rarely in the *Upaniṣads*.[2] Nonetheless, the "aspect" denoted is clearly that now normally venerated under the name of *Śiva*.

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[1] "*brahmaṇo vā vaitā agryās tanavah parasyāmṛtasya śarirasya*". *Maitrī* IV:6.

[2] *Śiva*, as a noun for the *deva*, occurs in the major *Upaniṣads* only clearly in three places—*Svetāśvatara* III:11, *Maitri* VI:31, *Kaivalya* (throughout, though especially, 7, 8, 18, 20). Some interpreters even dispute these.

This, the *trimurti*, is, then, a religious presentation, for the purposes of improving veneration and worship, of the more purely metaphysical Teaching of the three *guṇas*, or principial sources of manifestation, whose expression-in-combination results in the *nāma-rūpa* (name : shape) Cosmos.[1] This again is made plain by *Maitrī*, when it speaks of *Prajāpati* as tripartite in the following way.

> "Now then, indeed, that *tamas*-made part (*tāmaso 'ṁso'sau*) of him (*Prajāpati*), O Brahmacaris, this is this *Rudra* (*yo'yam rudra*). Now then, indeed, that *rajas*-made part of him, O Brahmacharis, this is this *Brahmā*. Now then, indeed, that *sattva*-made part of him, O Brahmacharis, this is this *Viṣṇu*."[2]

In brief, then, *Śiva*, the *deva*-symbol for the principle of Divine Dissolution, or its expression, is *guṇa tamas*, "the inward-tending, dissolute-darkness principle"; *Brahmā*, a *deva*-symbol for the function of Creation, or its expression, is *guṇa-rajas* "the outward-tending, expanding-manifestation principle"; and *Viṣṇu*, the god of Divine Conservation, its principle or expression, is *guṇa-sattva*, "the cohesion-maintaining, true-nature conserving principle." *Guṇa-sattva*, it might be as well to note, maintains "cohesion" in the sense of the balance of the "tension" between the inward-thrust of *tamas* and the outward-thrust of *rajas*. One or two words about this Teaching are important.

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[1] See, for instance, *Bṛhad.* 1:4:7. "*taddhedam tarhy avyākṛtam asit, tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyakriyata.*" "That-this (the Cosmos) then was unmanifest. It (*Ātman*:*Brahman*) manifest Itself only as name-form."

[2] "atha yo ha khalu va vāsya tāmaso 'ṁso' sau sa brahmacarīno yo'yam rudro' tha yo ha khalu va vasya rājaso 'ṁso' sau sa brahmacārino yo'yam brahmātha yo ha khalu vā vāsya sāttviko 'ṁso' sau sa brahmacarino yo 'yam viṣṇuḥ." *Maitrī* V:2.

First, *Śiva's tamas* must not be confused with the "*tāmasāni*", or "*tamasic*"-qualities, spoken of at III:5 in the same *Upaniṣad*. There we find the following listed as "*tāmasāni*":

> "bewilderment, fear, depression, sleepiness, sloth, heedlessness, old-age, grief, hunger, thirst, weakness (of will), anger, unorthodoxy, ignorance, jealousy, cruelty, stupidity, shamelessness, meanness, rashness, unevenness-of-temper."[1]

A formidable list indeed of downward-tending, inertia-inducing, non-productive features of humanity. But far from *Śiva's tamas* being of this clearly inferior, befogging, and derivative kind, *Maitrī* speaks of it as "in the Supreme" (*pare*), and as being the *origin* (*agra*) of all else. "*Tamo vā idam agra āsīd ekam, tat pare svāt*: Indeed, this origin (of *Viśvam*, the Cosmos) was *tamas* alone. This was *in* the Supreme (*Brahman*, conceived of as *Prajāpati*)," (*Maitrī*; V:2).

The "dissolution" *Śiva* exacts is precisely *of* the *tāmasāni* above, is *of* "the darkness of inertia-inducing, downward-tending, ignorance"; and the "darkness" *Śiva* "spreads" is that of the pre-manifestation *Brahman*, the Primal, *avyakta*—Light that broods before the beginning of things. In other words, *guṇa-tamas*, as *Śiva*, is not downward-tending, or *away* from Light, but *inward* tending, away from expansive manifestation, *towards* the Unspeakable Light of *Brahman.*

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[1] "sammoho bhayam viṣādo nidrā tandrī pramādo jarā sokaḥ kṣut pipāsā kārpaṇyam krodho nastikyam ajnanam matsaryam naiskarunyam mūdhatvam nirvṛīḍatvam nirākṛtitvam uddhatatvam asamatvam iti tāmasāni.

In similar vein, *Brahmā's rajas* is not to be mistaken for the *rājasāni* of 111:5. These are:

> "inner-thirst, affection, passion, covetousness hurting others, lust, hatred, deceit, envy, insatiability, unsteadfastness, fickleness, distractedness, ambitiousness, acquisitiveness, clutching at-the-praise-of-friends (*mitrānugrahanam*), dependence-on-family (or, "family-pride"; *parigrahavalamba*), aversion to unpleasant and over-attachment to pleasant objects, caustic-in-speech (*suktasvara*), gluttony (*annatamas*)".[1]

Guṇa-rajas as *Brahmā* is of course in no way such unbalancing, disquieting, fundamentally frenetic human traits as these. It is, indeed, the very first expression of *Param Tamas,* or *avyakta-Brahman.* It is the principle of the *operation* of making manifest, which, far from unbalancing and disturbing existence, comes before "existence" which it puts abroad in terms of the true and pure (*sattvic*) nature of things. *Guṇa-rajas*, as the principle of outward-tending expansion from within *Param Tamas*, establishes the first movement of It towards *viśvam.* In brief, both the *tāmasāni* and

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[1] "antastṛṣṇā sncho rāgo lobho hiṁsā ratir dvistir vyāvṛtatvam īrṣyā kāmam asthiratvam calatvam vyagratvam jigīṣārthopārjanam mitrānugrahaṇam parigrahāvalambo niṣṭeṣvindriyārthesu dviṣṭiriṣṭeṣvabhiṣvaṅgah suktasvaro 'nnatamastv iti rājasāni." *Maitrī* III:5. Compare, *B/gītā* XVIII: 20-40.

rājasāni of 111:5 are characteristics of one's *bhūtātmā*, the false picture one has of oneself as "made of" "elements" (*bhūtās*). They do not characterize *Ātman*, the person one truly is, despite one's ignorance (*avidyā*) of being so. And *Siva's tamas* and *Brahmā*'s *rajas* "belong to", or are "in" *Ātman*, or *Brahman*, most especially in the guise of *Prajāpati*.

Secondly, a lesson is to be learnt from the often ignored ordering of the Three in *Maitrī*. It is not *sattva*, as Truth or Light, first, and *tamas*, as "darkness", last, but indeed the very opposite. And whilst this enshrines a deep metaphysic, it is not difficult to understand. For, ontologically speaking, there must first be the Primal *avyakta*, the pre-manifestation *Brahman*; there must, that is first of all be the Unmanifest Light of Darkness, or *tamas*. Next, speaking again ontologically and not chronologically, must be the principle of the *operation of* manifestation, *per se*, namely, the form of movement—i.e., *rajas*. And next must be the principle of manifestable Light, or of the true, essential natures of all possible manifestation—i.e., principial Truth and Light, or *sattva*. To these, *Maitrī* interestingly adds the first non-principial expression of the Ultimate, namely, principial truth (*sattva*), made manifest: that is, "true natures, *in esse*", the *actual essences* of things (*rasa*), as distinct from the *principle* which gives rise to them (*sattva*).

A third useful thing to note here is the image each of the Three is designed to evoke. The above

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[1] See *Maitrī* IV:2.

ordering is so often missed because two very simple things are forgotten: (i) that all are *devās*, equally and (ii) they are a Tri-partite One. This means that each will express an aspect of the Ultimate in its own right, and not by proxy through any of the others. In other words, whilst the normal meanings of "light" and "darkness" may appear to be reversed, this is not so in any sense other than that needed by the ontology to do its Teaching. In fact, all of *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva* intermingle as one, and none can have any real meaning without the others. The term "*avyakta*" (unmanifest)—*tamas*—relies upon the other, "*vyakta*" (manifest)—*rajas*—for its meaning ; as does "darkness" (*tamas*) upon "light" (*sattva*), "inward" (*tamas*) upon "outward" (*rajas*), "shrinking" (*tamas*) upon "expanding" (*rajas*), "dissolution" (*tamas*) upon "creating" (*rajas*), and "conservation" (*sattva*) upon them both.

Tamas, *rajas*, and *sattva* are each "parts" (*aṁsa*) of a principial triad, linked *by definition*, and not by accident. For this reason, the functions normally attached to *Śiva*, *Brahmā*, and *Viṣṇu* independentally are often in the myth found to be interchangeable. For one is as much the others as it is itself: and all, or each, can be venerated in one's quest for an understanding of the Ultimate. Their ontological differences do not entail any in *value of substance*, nor any in time. They are symbols for co-eval, conjointly co-inhering, "aspects" of the One "substance". And by way of simple illustration, *Viṣṇu*, the *last* of the Three in the ontological chain, is later described in terms normally reserved for the Ultimate alone.[1]

It is incidentally understandable why the Teaching of *Āvatāras*, or Divine Descents or Incarnations, should have centered about *Viṣṇu* far more than either *Śiva* or *Brahmā*. For *Viṣṇu* is the principle of that which gives *nāma-rūpa*, or manifest name:shape—i e., "informed *esse*"—to things in a far more patent way than either of the others. It would simply not be religiously, or mythically, viable to think of Incarnation, either as instantiation of the principle leading inward, away from manifest-being, or of the principle of movement *per se*, and without further mode-ification. For it is *Viṣṇu*, as *sattva*, which precisely mode-ifies. This is part of the Teaching conveyed by stressing this aspect. Accordingly, it is to be expected that the tradition of Divine Descents should express itself in terms of enfleshment of *Viṣṇu* rather more than of *Śiva* or *Brahmā*. Indeed, there are said to be ten Incarnations of *Viṣṇu* relevant to this *Mahā-Yuga* (time-cycle),[2] nine already made manifest, among which the most important are *Kṛṣṇa* and *Buddha*, and one yet to come (called *Kalki*, who will come at the end of the *Yuga*, mounted on a white stallion, and effecting judgement, much as the Horsemen of the Apocalypse).

Though of course, Descents, especially of *Śiva* are not unknown, or not unclaimed. *Śankaracarya*, the great eighth century *Advaitist*, is sometimes spoken of in this way, and Ramana Maharshi is also thought by some to have been *Śiva*-incarnate. But Hinduism has not seen fit to advance any specific *Āvatāric* Teaching in their regard, as it has with *Viṣṇu*: and that is the significant fact.

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[1] See *Maitrī* VI : 13, 23, 38.

[2] Each *Mahā-Yuga* (Great-Age) is said to last 4,326,000 human years, and to be divided into four *yugas*, or "ages", *Kṛta Yuga* (or, *Satya Yuga*), *Tretā Yuga*, *Dvāpara Yuga*, and *Kali Yuga*. We are said to be nearing the end of the *Kali Yuga* of the present *Mahā-Yuga*.

We might finally consolidate their respective images by noting a link between centripetal and centrifugal in their symbolism, which nonetheless proves a difference of *image*, not of substance, of thought form, not of real-form, of function, not of fact. *Rajas* we might describe as centrifugal, being outward, expansive in tendency: and the image conveyed here is that of the Ultimate, endlessly expressed in all things. *Tamas* we might think of as centripetal, since shrinking ever inward, away from movement, to a dimensionless point: and the image conveyed here is that of the Ultimate, uncharacterisably (*acintya*) behind and beyond all things. Finally, *sattva* can be viewed as that which maintains a balance between the centripetal and the centrifugal: and here the image is that of the Ultimate, holding together the true-nature .*svabhāva* as *Ātman*) of things against alien onslaught. All these images are valid of the Ultimate; and since they bespeak different "aspects" and not conflicting ones, they dwell in happy harmony.

On this point, it is well to observe once more how failing to watch the actual wordings of *śruti* can grossly mislead. For, if *Maitrī* is indicative—and both the coherent interpretation I have given, plus the lack of any more, or even equally adequate one, would suggest it is—Alain Daniélou is wrong to think of *Viṣṇu* as centripetal and *Śiva* as centrifugal, with *Brahmā* as the "tension"—maintaining, balance-holding principle.[1] Nothing in *Maitrī* is clearer than that *Viṣṇu* is this latter, *Śiva* the centripetal or inward-shrinking principle, and *Brahmā* the centrifugal or outward-scattering principle. Daniélou's mistake has been in part to ignore the *reversal* of normal meanings for light:darkness, so that the latter, not the former, is ontologically prior,[2] and in part to get caught with the wrong model. The correct model for the images here is of "in:out", relative the Ultimate, not of "up:down". Were it the latter, there could be no doubt, as indeed Daniélou claims, that *tamas* would be the principle of cosmic movement *down and away from* the centre, or Ultimate *per se*, and this is clearly counter to the Teaching of *Maitrī*, which sees it as not only "*in* the Supreme", but as the "origin" (*agra*) of all (*sarvam* or *viśvam*). And *Maitrī* must be right, for if movement is "down and away", the directional implication is that the being moving is over more and, in theory, ultimately infinitely removed from the point (here, the Ultimate) it is distanced from. But it would be quite wrong to see any of the Three as engendering movement which might result in being infinitely distanced from the Ultimate. They are indeed all "parts" (*aṁśas*) of *Prajāpati*, here surrogate for the Ultimate; and their proper understanding and veneration, each and every one, must lead *to* the Ultimate.

Briefly, this model is faulty because linear. For cosmic symbolism is, or should rightly be spherical, with all movement irradiating from a common, dimensionless centre. It is in this sense that *rajas* betokens the principle of movement, outwards: it is the principle of irradition, geometrically possible in an infinite number of directions, all connected, co-evally, to a common centre—*Brahman*, *per se*. It is *Brahman* Who irradiates, in terms of Its hidden (*guḥa*) or mysterious power called "*māyā*". Being spherical, there is in the Cosmos no up nor down in any absolute way, but only in or out, relative to *Brahman*, the Dimensionless Centre. Accordingly, a symbolism stressing "up:down" will either prove false, or misleading. This is why the Sun (*sūrya*; *āditya*), with its infinite possibilities for irradition from a common core, is so centrally symbolic to the Hindu.

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[1] See, *Hindu Polytheism*, pp. 149, 190, 232.

[2] *Maitrī* IV : 2. Cf. *B/gītā* II:69.

But *Śiva's* inward-shrinking, or centripetal movement, of course *entails* dissolution, and hence dispersal of all levels of manifestation, cosmologically. And just here, of course, lies the temptation and ultimate error of confusing the metaphysical essence of the *Śiva*-symbol with its factual concomitants in the Cosmos.

Perhaps I should add the following correctives to the above about "the Three". Firstly, only *Siva* and *Viṣṇu* are venerated to any extent in India today, and one must, indeed, search deep into the mists of a hidden antiquity for a time when *Brahmā* was widely venerated. Secondly, this clarity of function-symbolism is deceptive; for both *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* are venerated as surrogates for a far richer range of Divine expression than the simpleness of the above distinction might at first suggest. Indeed, both these *devās* take not one, but hundreds – possibly thousands—of different shapes and forms throughout India, expressing nuances of an almost indefinite number of ways in which these various "aspects" intermingle in expressing themselves in the Cosmos. Thirdly, terms like "Creation", "Dissolution" and "Conservation" are dangerous, as they are not at all points the same as they would be in a Western context. For instance, Creation in Hinduism is not often, and certainly not necessarily, thought to be by fiat, or deed, of a Personal Deity; but far rather by trans-personal irradition or emanation of *Brahman*, the Ultimate.

Perhaps I should further add that, in approaching Hinduism, no useful purpose could be served by asking whether (i) the doctrine of the *guṇas*, or (ii) that of the *devās*, most accurately depicts the truth. For this is a not very helpful Nominalist issue. The point is, that each functions in a particular context—that of practical religion in the one case, and metaphysics in the other—to perform a specific task therein. Religion, poetry and myth will talk about *devās*; whereas philosophy and metaphysics will find more use for the less pictorial *guṇa*-language. But neither is more correct, or more accurate, than the other. Merely more adequate to a certain task in a certain context.

V. Finally, then, to summarize. The Christian word for its Ultimate, that which it venerates as Supreme above all else, is "God", the English word for which the Latin equivalent is "*deus*", and the French, "*le dieu*". Now the last two clearly flow straight into European parlance from the hoary mists of antiquated Sanskrit. They are undoubtedly European equivalents for the Sanskrit "*devā*"; as of course, "divinity" and "divine".

Hence the confusion and unjust accusation, for "*devās*" are by no means thought of as that which is Ultimate within Hinduism, except in the sense that they are sometimes venerated as *symbolic vehicles* for the Ultimate. Indeed, as *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1:4:10 remarks above, not even *devās* can stop me, a *human* being, from "becoming" the Ultimate, for not even "the gods" can rob me of *Brahma-vidyā*, once attained. For—and this is a simple point in logic—when I attain *Brahma-vidyā*, I realize that what I truly am is the same as what "the gods" most truly are.

On the other hand—and here we may have a distinguishing mark of Hinduism—"whoever another god (than his own *Ātman*) venerates—(after the fashion) 'I am one; he (the *devā*) another (distinct from me)'—he does not know (that *Ātman*, his innermost-self, is *Brahman*)." In other words, if Christianity holds that the Ultimate is essentially distinct from me, so that self-knowledge does not amount to knowledge of Divinity, Hinduism's doctrine of the nature of the Ultimate differs most fundamentally from that of Christianity.

It is not my intention to judge upon this difference, though it does seem clear that the *mystical* strains of the Semitic traditions differ little from the Hindu position here.[1] Nonetheless, and however this may be, our task is not to investigate this difference, but merely to point to the above phenomena as very real sources of misunderstanding. With this in place, approaching Hinduism should harbour fewer dangers than otherwise it might.

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[1] See the works of Vladimir Lossky, especially his *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, and his *Primer of Eastern Orthodoxy*, translated by my wife and I, and hopefully to appear shortly. Also, the excellent works on *Sūfīsm* by Frithjof Schuon, Martin Lings and Titus Burckhardt.

7

HINDUISM AND PANTHEISM

I

In a piece titled *Pantheism and Mysticism*,[1] Nils Bjorn Kvastad makes a number of claims about Hinduism. Now, though it is hard to be clear, for not only does he fail to quote a single original scripture (he *mentions* the names of two), but everything he does quote comes either from anti-Hindus (like the Catholic thinker, R.C. Zaehner), or non-Hindus (like the American philosopher, W.T. Stace), he appears to believe that something he calls "acosmic pantheism" reflects orthodox Hinduism, because it is found in something else he calls "*Vedanta*".

He remarks: "Acosmic pantheism is generally defined as the view that only God truly exists, being identical with the 'real world'. But the sense world is an illusion. When acosmic pantheism is based on mystical experiences, as it usually is (at least ultimately), this 'real world' is almost exclusively identified with our "*X*".[2] "*X*" is Kvastad's shorthand for—"that divine element perceived as penetrating nature during extrovertive experiences."[3]

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[1] *Sophia*; Vol. XXV; No. 2; July 1975.

[2] Op cit; p. 12.

[3] Op cit; p. 8.

He continues:

> "Acosmic pantheism is in particular found in *Vedanta* where it seems to be based on mystical experience. Here it is generally said that *Brahman* is the only thing really existing. It is the world-soul, immovable, infinite, and unchanging. But this flux of the sense world is an illusion. When a man usually only perceives this illusion and not Brahman, this is due to a factor, "Maya", which prevents his knowledge of reality."[1]

II

Now, some of the unclarities I find here are these.

(i) *Brahman*, the word for Hinduism's Ultimate, is not equivalent to the Semitic "God", for which in Hinduism the term *Īśvara*,[2] and sometimes *Puruṣottama*, are reserved. *Īśvara* is *Brahman*, manifest for quite specific reasons I won't venture into now,[4] so that It may be viewed as if It were a Supreme Person, worthy of all worship. Indeed, "*Puruṣottama*" *simply means* "Supreme Person".

(ii) *Brahman*, as the cognizable Ultimate I am assuming Kvastad's "*X*" stand for—indeed, if it doesn't, he is not even addressing Hinduism—is not "a divine element", nor is It "perceived", still less, as "penetrating nature". *Brahman is* the Ultimate, apprehended, through *dhyāna* (usually translated "meditation"), in the most ultimate form of

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[1] Op cit; p. 12.

[2] See the previous essay, *Hinduism & Polytheism.*

[3] See *Bhagavadgītā* 15:15-18.

[4] See *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. IV.

samādhi (lit., "integrated-beyondness"), known as *nirvikalpa,* or "non-conceptualizable". And this cognition, or lived-understanding, far from being "perceived...penetrating nature", is a non-perceptual level of consciousness (*citta*) achieved only in *transcending* nature.

Naturally, active verbs like "achieved" are at best pointers to the truth about this, for it isn't that "I", an individual, get some content of consciousness I didn't have before. It's rather that I, an individual, do certain activity (such as *dhyāna*) such that the consciousness I have of what I believe myself to be, as individual, vanishes in face of a wholly new manner of being suddenly consciously present. This manner of being is that conveyed to us, the unenlightened, by the Enlightened through words like *avyakta* (unmanifest), *anantam* (non-finite), and *nitya* (non-temporal). Consciousness (*citta*), in other words, then knows Itself to be other than what It—"I", self-aware as individual—once took Itself to be. This transcendental manner of consciousness is called "*Brahma-vidyā*", or "*Brahman*-knowledge", and is equated with *Ātmā-vidyā*", where "*ātman*" is the Hindu word for what I, ultimately, discover myself to be (in the above way).

It is perhaps as well to note that beliefs which underlie claims made to this level of consciousness, or transcendent cognition, are not "bliks" in Kvastad's[1] sense of—"unproveable:unrefuteable".

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[1] This is a term he has borrowed from the Oxford philosopher, R.M. Hare, who uses it, roughly, to refer to "beliefs" which seem open neither to proof, nor refutation. Hare believes "religious" beliefs to be typically of this kind.

For these claims are simply empirical ones made on the basis of a certain programme of activity, which can be indulged, and these claims thereby tested, like any other empirical claim or activity. That testing these claims involves "achieving" a trans-perceptual (i.e., trans-"sense perception"), trans-rational level of consciousness, shows no more than that they are not testable, perceptually or rationally, but only in the manners outlined as appropriate by the tradition. This would only suggest them to be "bliks" if only sense-perception or reason (some might add a peculiar form of natural-intuition) could test such claims. But that Hinduism, and its relations—*Buddhism*, *Jainism*, *Sikhism*—do advance other methods which *can* be used, in itself *at least* shows there are other ways of testing. And to dismiss them without trial, *because* they are not sense-perception nor reason (nor, perhaps, this form of intuition) would of course simply be tendentiously circular.

To round this off, we might note that Kvastad's words, giving his reasons for holding these claims to be "bliks", are a mixture of confusion and falsehood. He remarks that, because "what is directly given (namely, *X*) is just a phenomenological state in which some sensory experiences are penetrated by something else", to hold this *X* to be in some ontological way superior to "the sense world", by which I take it he means "the world made manifest, whether to physical senses or not", is to hold to a blik. But these remarks are of course untenable, if supposed to be about *Brahma-vidyā*. For *Brahma-vidyā* is neither "a phenomenological state", being both beyond the phenomenal and in no sense a "state", nor in any sense a manner of being "in which some sensory appearances are penetrated by something (?) else". These words simply misdescribe *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Indeed, they give a positive, dualist description where none but negative, *advaitist* (non-dualist) ones are possible.

(iii) Existential predicates, in phrases like "Acosmic pantheism is generally defined as the view that only God truly *exists*" (italics, mine), are misplaced. Whether God as *Īśvara* can be said to "exist" is debateable. But sofar as He can, He certainly is not the only thing which "truly" does. Existential predicates apply, equally, to the entire manifest Cosmos.

On the other hand, the case is far clearer of *Brahman*: as the Ultimate Principial Source of all existence, It cannot be said to be among those things which exist. Accordingly, existential predicates cannot be applied to *Brahman* at all; so clearly not to *Brahman* "only".

Of course, this may be a slip of the pen, and it may not be these predicates Kvastad is speaking of, but those which *can* alone apply to the Ultimate Principial Source of all existence. But of these, nearly all of which are negative, and a list of which I'll shortly give, there ean be no dispute, since they belong to the Ultimate, *ex hypothesi*. Whether of course they have an actual referent other than in the consciousness of those "living-released" (*jivanmukti*) ones we consider enlightened is another matter into which I won't go here.

It is important also to realize that *Brahman,* as the Ultimate, is nowhere in Hinduism said to be equatable even with anything called, "the real world". I take it that the quotes Kvastad puts around "real world" are merely alarm ones, and that they are not meant to indicate a true quote. Certainly, the Sanskrit word for "world", *loka*, is only ever used in relation to *Brahman* to indicate one or both of two things. (i) That *Brahman* is essentially other than its referent, if this is finite manifest existence. And it's as well to recall Hinduism's *triloka* doctrine: that our *loka* is only one of three, *deva-loka* (or, god-world*) being "above", and *preta-loka* (or world of the "hungry departed spirits" being "below".[1] Sometimes these are divided into six, and some forms of *Buddhism* proliferate even further. No matter how many, all *lokas* are finite, and other-than-*Brahman.* (ii) That *Brahman* is the Principial Source and Reality-Sustainer of all *lokas.* What realness any of these worlds have is in some way "because of" *Brahman.* It is this, I take it, that Kvastad has in mind. Unfortunately, it is in no way logically required that the source of any property should "have" that property "in" it. At most, logic demands that the source be empowered to produce and sustain. And *Brahman* is quite explicitly said *not* to have those properties, so not to be those *lokas* of which It is—in a way I have not of course explained—the Source and Sustainer.

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[1] It may be felt that the Hindu doctrine is one of *pitṛ-loka*, world of the "fathers" or "ancestors", and not of *preta-loka*, world of "hungry spirits". But though I would argue this not to be so, here is not the place to do so. As B.C. Law has well illustrated in *The Buddhist Conception of Spirits* and *Heaven And Hell In Buddhist Perspective*, this Buddhist doctrine is a clear reflection of widely held Hindu belief, even were this belief not always clearly written into its literature. But see, *Śatapatha Brāhmana. Manu Saṁhita*, and such passages of the *B. Gītā* as 1:42, all of Ch. 16, and 17:4.

(iv) There are other important unclarities in Kvastad's words about Hinduism—such as, which of the many traditions of *Vedānta* he is making his claims about, and such as the claim on p. 11 that "chakras" are "some kind of nerve center" an outrageous falsehood)—but enough has been said to dismiss *his* claims to pantheism for Hinduism, since all too clearly it is not Hinduism he is addressing. And showing this has been important, since all too often this claim does issue from detractors, usually ignorant of the Scriptures themselves, and on nothing better than just such confusions as these.

III

But of course, the claim—that Hinduism is pantheistic—remains in its own right, whether in Kvastad's case it has welled from an ignorance of the basics of this tradition or not. Accordingly, let me address the sort of utterance thought by many Westerners, occasionally even by Indian scholars themselves, to enshrine an affirmation of pantheism, by which these scholars at least mean the doctrine that "Everything is God, and God is everything"—or, in the outrageous parody put to me in conversation by R.C. Zaehner, "The doctrine that everything is everything else.” These charges, I will argue, are mistaken.

The utterance I have in mind comes from one of the earliest and most revered of *Upaniṣads*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4:4:5.

> “He, this *ātman*, is most truly *Brahman*—taking the shape or being manifested as, wisdom-substance, mind, life-force; eyes (or the power of sight), ears (or the power of hearing); the elements earth, water, air, and space ; light and non-light, desire and non-desire, anger and non-anger; righteousness and non-righteousness; (being, indeed) formed of all (*sarva-maya*; that is, the Cosmos).”[1]

These words, and perhaps more especially in their literal translation which, along with the Sanskrit, I’ve offered in a footnote,[1] are the sort of utterance which inspire the charge of “pantheism” from scholars, and non-scholars, not of the Hindu tradition. But this, done merely on the basis of these words themselves, taken *in abstracto* and, what’s more, in English, amounts to plucking a statement, not just out of its *textual* context, but entirely out of the tradition within which, and *only* within which, we can be sure it has what meaning it is meant to have. Not only that, but imposing on it the kind of interpretation it *would*, or *might* have, were it part of some *other* tradition. Obviously, this is suspect. Interpreting something, taken away from where it truly belongs, in terms of structures, linguistic or otherwise, from some place alien to it, must always be fraught with peril.

Still, just this is what happens when words such as the above are said to be "pantheistic", in virtue of nothing more than their face-value to a non-Hindu. This kind of injustice happens, I'm afraid all the time in comparative studies of traditions. Accordingly, my method will be to illustrate the manner in which these words fit into their textual and traditional context; and, having done so, argue by implication that this interpretation must be accepted over any which not only fails to take these contexts into account, but also imposes alien ones upon the words in question.

It is well to note that these words begin with a clear statement of the central *Upaniṣadic*, and hence Hindu teaching—that *ātman* (the person I most truly am, my being *in esse*) is, when properly understood, known *to be Brahman* (that principial or ontological Ultimate which is the Cosmos, or being *in general*, *in esse*). "*Sa vā ayam ātmā brahma*": "He, this *ātman*, is most truly *Brahman*." And since my intention is to show that orthodox Hinduism—by which I mean, Hinduism as founded upon the canonic *Upaniṣads* and *Bhagavadgītā*, which are undoubtedly its central scriptures—is misconstrued if thought to be pantheistic, I will occasionally use this, its central doctrine, to effect this intention.

Now the term of crucial importance here in "*maya*", since what we have here is a catalogue of "*mayas*";[1] and what must be asked is not what it appears to mean when rendered into English, but how it is being used in the context of this catalogue in question. Now this term "*maya*", which must be distinguished from "*māyā*", as Kvastad significantly fails to do, occurs time and again in the *Upaniṣads* to execute a certain *teaching* purpose. A favourite teaching practice of the *Upaniṣadic Ṛṣis* was to address a *śiṣya's* (student's) problem—e.g., "What is *ātman* (my true self)?"—by going through possible candidates for an answer, dismissing each progressively more adequate, though not yet ultimate, candidate, and moving to the next. And often these candidates were spoken of as "*maya*"—that is, "formed", "shaped", or "manifest". Each, in other words, is considered to be *a manifestation* of, in the sense of "way of understanding", some yet deeper thing, with which it is not identical. But let me explain this little.

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[1] (i)—"sa vā ātmā brahma; vijnanamaya manomayah prāṇamayas, cakṣurmayaḥ strotramayaḥ, prithivīmayah āpoṁaya vāyumaya ākāsamayas, tejomayo'tejomayaḥ kāmamayo' Kāmamayaḥ krodhamayo'krodhamayaḥ, dharmamayo' dharmamayaḥ; sarvamayaḥ."

It will firstly prove informative to compare "*maya*" as it occurs here with a similar use in the more important doctrine of the *mayakośas*.[1] In each case the term "*maya*" is used to demonstrate what *ātman* is not, in order to show what It is. "*Maya*" comes from "*ma*; to measure, to form"; and in each case is used to convey the notion of something *appearing in the guise of*, conforming

(ii)—"He most truly this *ātman*, *Brahman* (is); "wisdom-substance" (*buddhi*)-formed, mind-formed. "life-force"-formed, eyes-formed (sight), ears-formed (hearing); earth-formed water-formed air-formed space(ether)-formed; light-formed non-light-formed desire-formed non-desire-formed anger-formed non-anger-formed *dharma*-formed non-*dharma*-formed; *sarvam*-formed".

[1] See for instance *Taittirīya Up*. 2:1-7.

itself to the "shape" of, or appearing such that it can helpfully be seen "as if." And it would be strange—though language of course does strange things—if the nearness of this term "*maya*" (मय) to the other more crucial Hindu term "*māyā*" (माया) were entirely accidental. And the doctrine of *māyā* is, in some part anyway, the doctrine of *Brahman's* Power (*śakti*) to manifest Itself in shapes and forms which, if taken literally, would belie Its true nature.

An excellent instance of *māyā* used most clearly to convey the sense of "*maya*", though something else as well, is *Bhagavadgītā V*:6.

"ajo 'pi sann avyayātmā
  bhutanam iśvaro 'pi san
prakṛtim svām adhiṣṭhāya
  sambhavāmy ātmamāyayā."

"Though unborn, though being of unchangeable-
  ātman,
  though being *Īśvara* (Lord-God) of all beings,
controlling my own manifest-nature,
  I (nonetheless) come-into-being through *ātma-
   māyā*."

And the meaning here quite clearly is twofold: not only that Krishna is the Power (*śakti*) responsible for his own being, but that, as this Power, he is also responsible for the *shape* (*maya*) he takes to the eye of the unenlightened—that is, in the world.

But even more this link—between "*maya*" and "*māyā*"—more dubious than I suspect, the point remains: that no good sense whatever would be served if we took this list of *mayas* to mean that

“Everything is *Brahman*, and *Brahman* is everything”, in any *literal* way. The point is rather that the ontological hierarchy clearly implied in the *mayakośa* doctrine is plainly here, in these supposedly pantheism entailing words, as well. As follows.

The doctrine of the *mayakośas* teaches that the human person *can be usefully seen as* various formed-sheaths (*maya-kośas*), each “surrounding” all the others inside it. And though all *can be seen as* vehicles through which the person expresses himself, some are nonetheless closer to what he truly is than others. For some go closer than others to satisfying the conditions of authentic personhood. The *manomayakośa* for instance, or “mind-sheath”—the person thought of as “mind-stuff”—is said more truly to approximate to personhood than *annamayakośa*, the “food (or, physical-body)-sheath”. To perhaps oversimplify, a person’s mind is, let us say, closer to his centre than his physical-body. And at least two other formed-sheaths—*vijñānamakośa*, or “wisdom-sheath”, and *ānandamayakośa*, or “bliss-sheath”—are more central still. Whilst *ātman*, which transcends them all, *is* his very centre, being personhood *per se*.

Now it seems to me certain, both because this, and *nothing else*, is what we should expect in terms of the text and the Hindu tradition, and because of what the Sanskrit anyway *means*, that the *mayas* spoken of in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4:4:5 must be seen in the same light—namely, as indicating a piece of teaching about different “*maya*”, or manifestation levels. Each presents *a level of understanding* through which the Ultimate, or *Brahma-vidyā* (*Brahman*-knowledge) might be attained in more or less adequate manners—the "wisdom-substance" (*buddhi*), mind (*manas*), life-force (*prāṇa*) *maya*-level; the eyes (*cakṣu*), ears (*strota*), and other vehicles-cum-powers-of-perception *maya*-level; earth (*pṛthi*), water (*apas*), air (*vāyu*), space (*ākāśa*), as principles-of-various-forms of-matter *maya* level; the light (*tejas*), non-light (*atejas*), desire (*kāma*), non-desire (*akāma*), anger (*krodha*), non-anger (*akrodha*) and perhaps also righteousness (*dharma*), non-righteousness (*adharma*) *maya*-level.

Now, I don't suggest that the words as we have them here preserve the *order* in which the *mayas* would have been introduced for the teaching in question. Though it's fairly clear that, for the first three *maya*-levels, they do. For the first, being that of *buddhi*, *manas* and *prāṇa*, clearly is an early reference to the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, or "inner-man" (literally, "inner-instrument"), which to Hinduism more nearly manifests the Ultimate then the powers of sense-organ-using perception; which in its turn is a higher *maya*-level than "physical matter"-manifestation.

It is further clear that the remaining *mayas* are advanced either as a single other *maya*-level, or as two further ones. The first three (*tejomaya*, *kāmamaya*, *krodhamaya*) at least, and possibly the fourth (*dharmamaya*) also, are in dicated to form a single group by the devise of combining affirmation and negation together. Moreover, it is reasonably clear why just these, and not other, contents of consciousness

—for that is the *maya*-level spoken of here—have been chosen. "*Tejas*", which literally means "light", sometimes "fire", is an obvious oft-used word for that consciousness-content which either *leads to* Enlightenment, by informing us about *dharma*, or deeds which, for us, *in fact do* promote an inward growth in *Brahma-vidyā*, Truth and Wisdom, or which *is* Enlightenment, that is, *Brahma-vidyā per se* (though then it would be inaccurate to call it "a content"). "*Kāma*", or desire, as the general consciousness-set of acquisitiveness, is that which must above all be overcome to achieve "*tejas*". And "*krodha*", or anger as "impassioned and destructive possessiveness", being that which above all blinds us to Light, by misleading us about It, is the reason *kāma* must be overcome; for this latter has *krodha* as its inevitable consequence.

The *Bhagavadgītā* links these three in the following way, and in doing so, gives yet another example of the "hieratic-sequence" teaching method I've argued to be in evidence here,

"dhyāyato viṣayān pumsah
   saṅgas teṣū pajāyate
saṅgāt samjayate kamah
   kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate

krodhād bhavati sammohah
   sammohāt smrtivibhramah
smṛtibhramsād buddhināso
   buddhināsat praṇasyati."

(*Bhagadavgītā*; *II*, 62-63)

"When a man concentrates on sense-objects,
   attachment to them is produced.

From attachment springs forth desire,
from desire, anger arises;
From anger comes total delusion;
from total delusion, loss of "remembrance"
(that *ātman* is *Brahman*) ;
from loss of "rememberance", loss of discrimination" (*buddhi*);
from loss of "discrimination", he perishes."

And though the suggested perishing does relate to literal physical death, for this loss of discrimination (between right and wrong, true-light and darkness) does hasten physical death by heightening ignorance, hence tension, anxiety and the like, the reference is essentially to a form of existential death. Such a person, characterized by a lack of "light", and hence in thrall to desire and anger, is "dead" to the possibility of *jivan-mūkti*; to, that is, the possibility of becoming that manner of sage-saint who has achieved Enlightenment through "release" (*mukti*) from ignorance (*avidyā*), whilst yet "alive" (*jivan*) to the unenlightened eyes of others.

Finally, *dharmamaya* could be yet another instance from the "consciousness-context" *maya*-level, since, like all the above *and their negations*—non-light, non-desire, non-anger—there is a clear sense in which *dharma* could be a content of consciousness: namely, the consciousness anyone might have of his *svadharma*, or that which, when followed, will lead him to *Brahma-vidyā* or Enlightenment. As such, it would refer to the most important form of *tejas*, namely, light upon those matters and ways which, *eo ipso*, promote one's betterment.

On the other hand, *dharma* stretches wider than *svadharma*, and refers to that pattern of behaviour for all creatures—human, "above" (as are the *devās*, Enlightened Ones (*buddhais*), and *Ṛṣis*), or "below" (as are animals and plants)—which, when followed, establishes *ṛta*, or "right order", where this means, "order expressing *Brahman in esse*". So that "*dharmamaya*" could simply be a reference to this "pattern", as manifest in the Cosmos: and *adharma*, as the Cosmos, insofar as it fails to reflect *ṛta* sofar, that is, as behaviour does not express a Oneness with *Brahman*. To Hinduism, we are presently living through the *Kali-Yuga*, or *Dark-Era*, characterized by *adharma*, which must eventually lead to *pralaya*, or "dissolution". And, to counter the objection that *Brahman* can scarcely be manifest *as* an order which *fails* to express It *in esse*, the answer is, firstly, that *Brahman* is no more ontologically *identical with* Its manifestations than I am with my deeds; and secondly, that the question is not really one of *Brahman* manifesting Itself in different ways—though if it were, there is no *logical* oddity in It doing so in ways which shine forth Its true nature *less* well rather than more so—but rather of Its true nature being *understood* more or less adequately. And the different *maya*-levels reflect different levels of adequacy, not exactly put abroad by *Brahman* as we think of, say, our deeds being "put abroad", but rather as reflecting the logic of what is considered to be realness by those who dwell, and live in terms of, these respective levels.

But whether the appropriate teaching order is wholly preserved by the text or not does not in the slightest affect the fact that the Hindu doctrine is that there are *maya*-levels, or different modes of manifestation *through which* the Ultimate can be approached.

IV

By now we are, I hope, beginning to understand the teaching better. For the claim is not that *Brahman is* the various *maya*-levels. This would simply not square with what *Brahman* is said to be otherwise. In *Bhagavadgītā* chapter *II* no less than fifteen predicates are used, though not necessarily descriptively, of what it calls "the embodied" (*śarīrina*; *dehina*), a circumlocution for *ātman*, hence *Brahman*. They are: *avināśi*, "non-perishable"; *avyaya*, "non-changeable"; *anāśin*, "non-destructible"; *aprameyasya*, "non-measurable"; *aja*, "non-born"; *nitya*, "eternal"; *śāśvata*, "constant"; *sarvagata*, "omnipresent"; *sthānu*, "steadfast"; *acala*, "non-movable"; *sanātana*, "everlasting"; *avyakta*, "non-manifest"; *acintya*, "non-conceivable"; *avikārya*, "non-variable"; *avadhya*, "non-violable".[1] And all of these could be paralleled from different places in different, much older *Upaniṣads*, and one or two—like, *anantam*, "non-finite"—added.

As will be seen, ten of these are clearly negative predications, and five, at least positive in form. And whilst I believe it could be shown that even the latter are merely positive in appearance, in fact doing service for some ultimately nugatory predication, it is patently obvious that even a list so comprehensive as this—and I know of none more so in any Hindu scripture—contains not a single predicate which could sensibly apply to any *maya*-level. Indeed, the *maya*-levels are a negation of everything predicated here. Not surprisingly, since the way these *Brahman*-predicates are by and large arrived at, in doing the teaching in question, is through negation of certain predicates suggested as applicable from the *maya*-levels; negation called for on the *logical* ground that, *ex hypothesi,* anything which was Ultimate *couldn't* have such properties, and on the *empirical* ground that It is anyway *known* by the Enlightened Ones not to.

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[1] See *B. Gītā* II:17-18. 20-21, 24-25, 30.

Accordingly, it would fly in the face of the entire Hindu tradition to suggest that *Brahman is* these *maya*-levels. Indeed, nothing is more roundly denied more often than that *Brahman* could be so. The entire *Upaniṣadic* teaching method is precisely to *illustrate* the impossibility of this being so. And whilst a tendentious non-Hindu might say this merely shows inconsistency, this could only be because such a critic had refused to examine the whole picture, the whole tradition, in the possibility of showing it otherwise. Since, in examining Spiritual Traditions, we are dealing with the repositories of what whole traditions have for millenia considered to be wisdom, the *assumption* must, if anything, be that inconsistencies are *less* rather than more likely. So that, where an interpretation can be given which abolishes them, or shows them to be trivial, this *eo ipso* is to be preferred to any which do not. Sadly, Western rationalism has rendered this manner of humility very rare indeed; and mostly we are taught that the gleanings of our own, unaided, single-handed reason carry *more* weight than the deliverances of entire traditions, sanctioned by millenia of wise-men.

Nevertheless, it is not the uninformed opinions of non-Hindus which should guide us, but the judgement of sage Hindus: hence, the judgement of *Upaniṣadic* and *Gītā* teaching. In which case, we may conclude that, whilst it is affirmed that any and everything can be a vehicle for *Brahman*-understanding, or *Brahma-vidyā*, since *Brahman*, being the Ultimate, is *ex hypothesi* their principial or ontological Source, and whilst all things can in this sense be seen as the "shapes" *Brahman* takes, *because*—again, *ex hypothesi—Brahman in esse*, or as known in *nirvikalpa samādhi*, takes no shapes (being *anantam*, *avyakta*, and ultimately *acintya*), It equally as clearly cannot be *equated with* any *or*—everything. Accordingly, pantheism—in any form, sofar as I can see, though certainly in the normative form I have spoken of—cannot be an accurate presentation of the orthodox Hindu understanding of the nature of the Ultimate.

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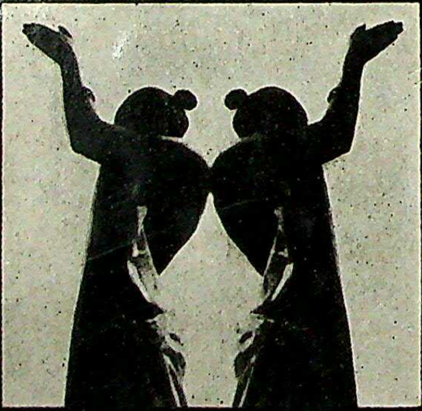

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